Bonsai TODAY

MAY - JUNE 89

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satsuki azalea • masahiko kimura styles a yew • winter jasmine
outstanding american bonsai • itoo motohisa styles a white pine
the technique of wiring • gallery of bonsai masterpieces

Bonsai TODAY

EDITORIAL

Bonsai are in truth living works of art with all the energy and complexity that life itself suggests. They are nature in microcosm, miniature organic creations of incredible beauty, delighting the eye and invigorating the spirit.

To many, growing bonsai is the highest form of the horticultural arts — but an interest in trees and in horticultural technique alone is simply not enough. It is a true art, in which you must develop a critical eye for line, form, texture, mass, space and color. And, perhaps more basically, a feeling for simplicity, tranquility and harmony with nature.

The techniques of the art must be learned, just as they must be learned in any art. You must learn the hows, whens and wheres of wiring, pinching, pruning and carving in order to turn that vision you have of the beauty locked within that little tree into reality. The horticultural skills are not difficult: the care of bonsai is much the same as it is for any garden plant, except perhaps a special allowance for the fact that it is living in a relatively small container.

Once the aesthetic principles are mastered, the styling techniques understood and the horticultural skills gained, it remains to put this knowledge into practice. Practice and perseverance, it must be, for it is only through the continued application of one's creativity that excellence is gained.

It is our goal at BONSAI TODAY to provide information, insight and inspiration. Many of our articles are and will be translations of current articles in Contemporary Bonsai, the leading Japanese bonsai periodical. Obviously the art of bonsai has reached a high level of refinement in Japan and we have much to learn from the Oriental concepts of the relationship between man and nature as well as about the specialized techniques developed over the centuries for the culture of bonsai. Articles will be selected and adapted to ensure maximum relevancy here in the West. Where appropriate, articles will be supported by further explanation by experts on this side of the Atlantic.

Bonsai is not just an Eastern experience; it is an art form practiced worldwide. BONSAI TODAY will also encourage and feature articles from anywhere in the world where innovation occurs.

Bonsai is a shared experience. In the next and future issues, we will provide information about coming bonsai events in this country and Canada. We encourage bonsai organizations and clubs to write or call about this service.

We welcome you to the first issue of BONSAI TODAY, thank you for your support and look forward to receiving your suggestions as to how we can make BONSAI TODAY the best possible bonsai resource for you.

THE EDITOR

FOREWORD

All over the world, people have become familiar with Bonsai. It doesn't matter whether the languages and customs are different. Anybody in the world can appreciate beautiful art and the beauty of nature.

It is very necessary to keep our minds healthy, happy and peaceful and the art of bonsai can fulfill some of these desires. Therefore bonsai culture is no longer just for eastern people, but it is shared with western people as well as northern people and people down under in Australia.

This new publication, Bonsai Today, will contain some very important information about bonsai to assist us in this wonderful world of miniature trees. The translations from Kindai Bonsai (Contemporary Bonsai) in Kyoto, Japan will be very valuable.

I sincerely want to congratulate the publishers of Bonsai Today and wish them success. I look forward to seeing the publication.

John Yoshio Naka
Los Angeles, California
January 4, 1989

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Bonsai
TODAY

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BONSAI ORGANIZATIONS

THE AMERICAN BONSAI SOCIETY

P.O. Box 358
Keene, NH 03431

The American Bonsai Society is a national organization publishing a quarterly journal and a quarterly newsletter. ABS offers a host of services to the bonsai community. For a sample magazine and membership information, write to the society at the above address.

BONSAI CLUBS INTERNATIONAL

2636 W. Mission Rd. #277
Tallahassee, FL 32304

Bonsai Clubs International guides clubs and individuals in their efforts to increase knowledge, skills and appreciation of Bonsai and related arts. BCI membership includes a bi-monthly magazine. BCI sponsors the annual International Bonsai Congress in major cities of the world. For further information contact Virginia Ellermann, business manager at the address above.

THE NATIONAL BONSAI FOUNDATION

P.O. Box 32377
Washington, D.C. 20007

For those unacquainted with the exciting prospect of the National Bonsai and Penjing Museum to be completed in the Nation's Capital, the following will bring you up to date.

The National Bonsai Foundation was created to develop and raise support for an international museum of the art of bonsai and penjing at the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, DC. The concept for museum of living sculpture was inspired by a gift from Japan to the people of the United States of 53 priceless bonsai on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of our country.

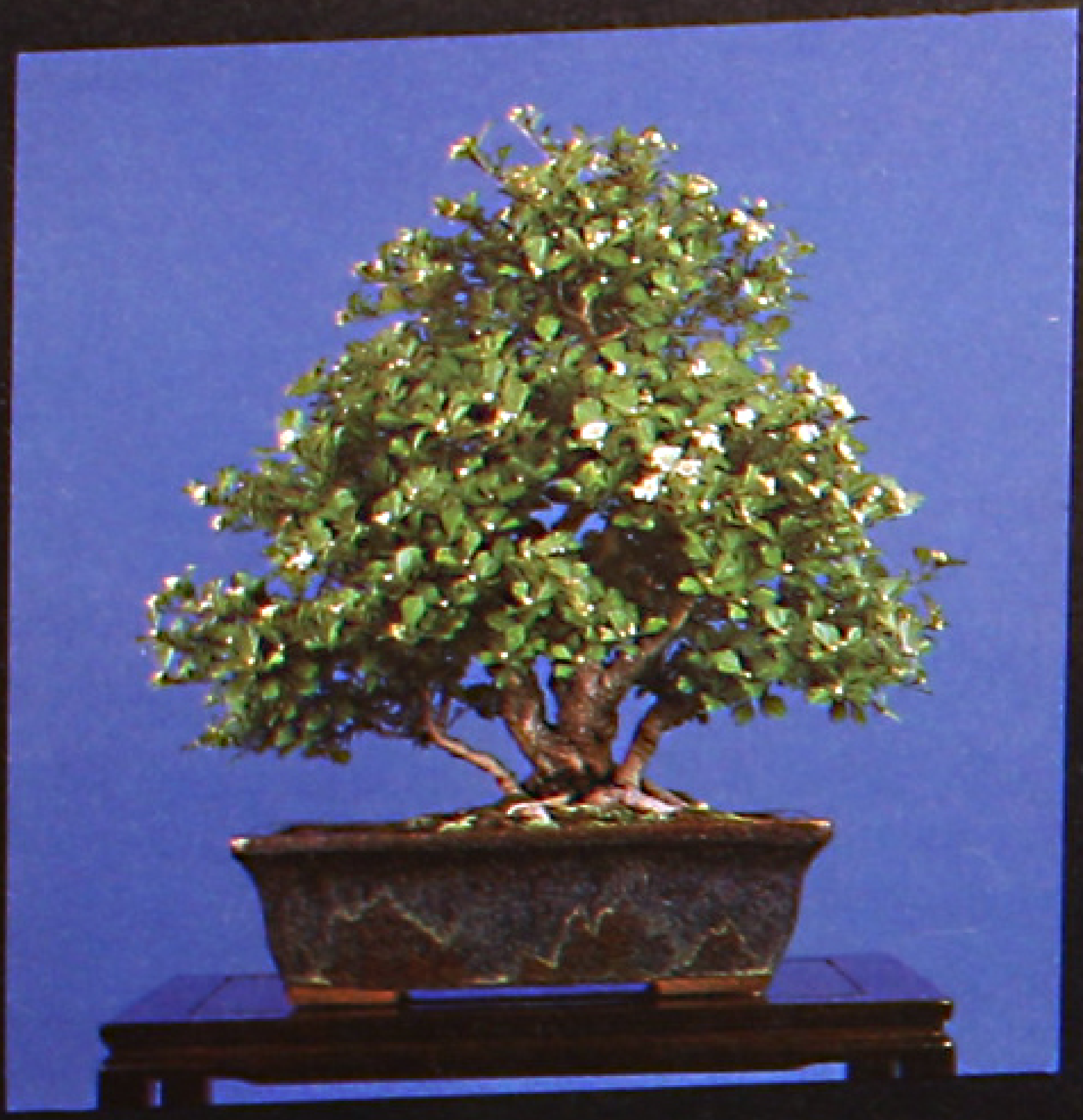
The U.S. Congress accepted the gift and directed that it be displayed on the grounds of the U.S. National Arboretum which is designated an historical landmark.

The Museum, when completed, will consist of the existing Japanese Bonsai Collection, the John Y. Naka Pavilion of North American Bonsai, a Chinese Penjing Pavilion, Asian and American gardens, a Tea House and Koi Pond. Bonsai from other parts of the world will be added over time. Special exhibits, educational programs, exchange fellowships, scientific research and intercultural events will comprise the program of the Museum.

In the Fall of 1988 two important events occurred: Ground breaking ceremonies for The John Y. Naka Pavilion for North American Bonsai, and Dedication of a gift of Chinese Penjing to the people of the United States.

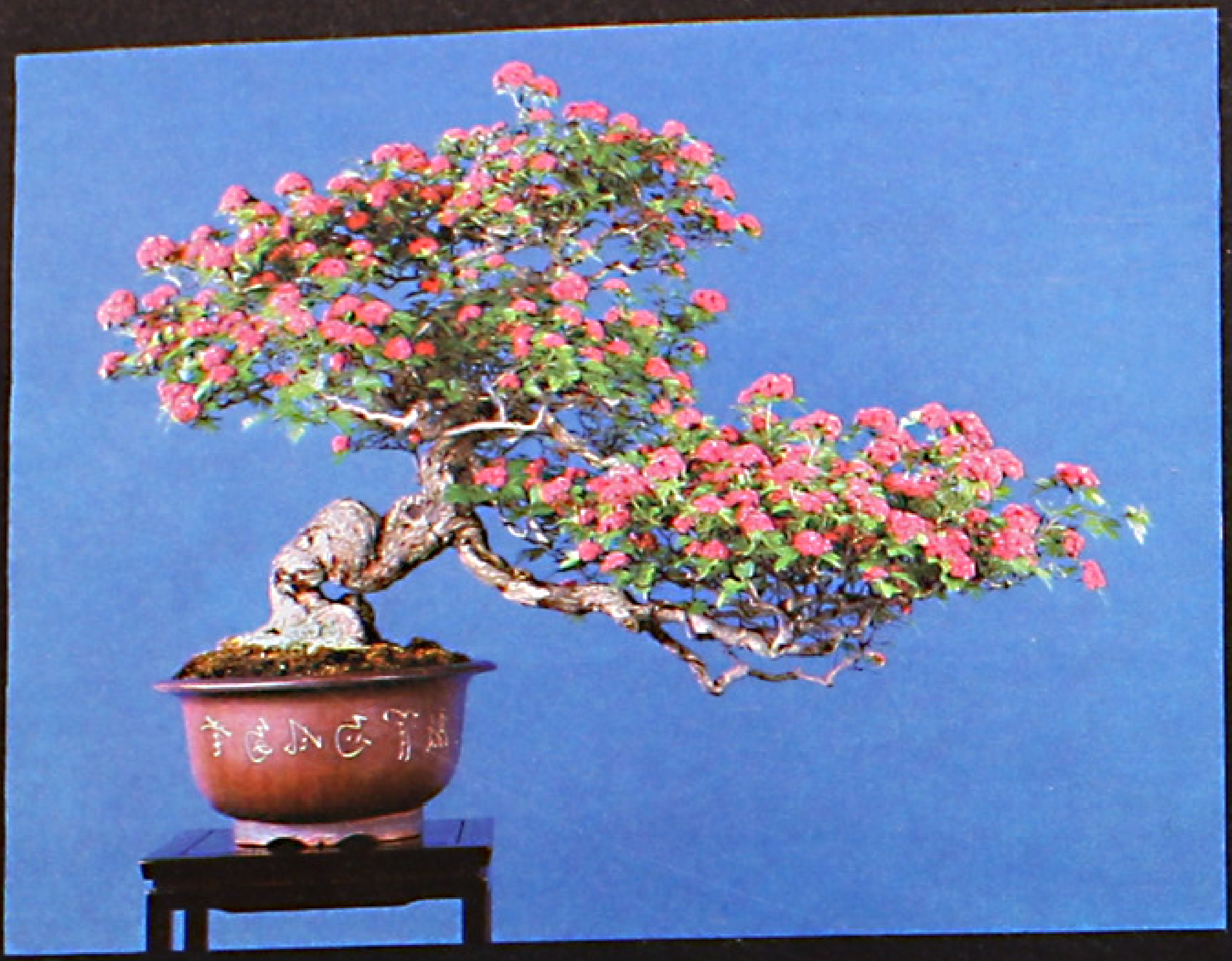
We hope that most bonsai enthusiasts, and certainly every Bonsai or Penjing Club in America will wish to be listed permanently in the Museum by joining the Committee of Thousands, a group of donors of $1000. or more given totally, or over a period of a year.

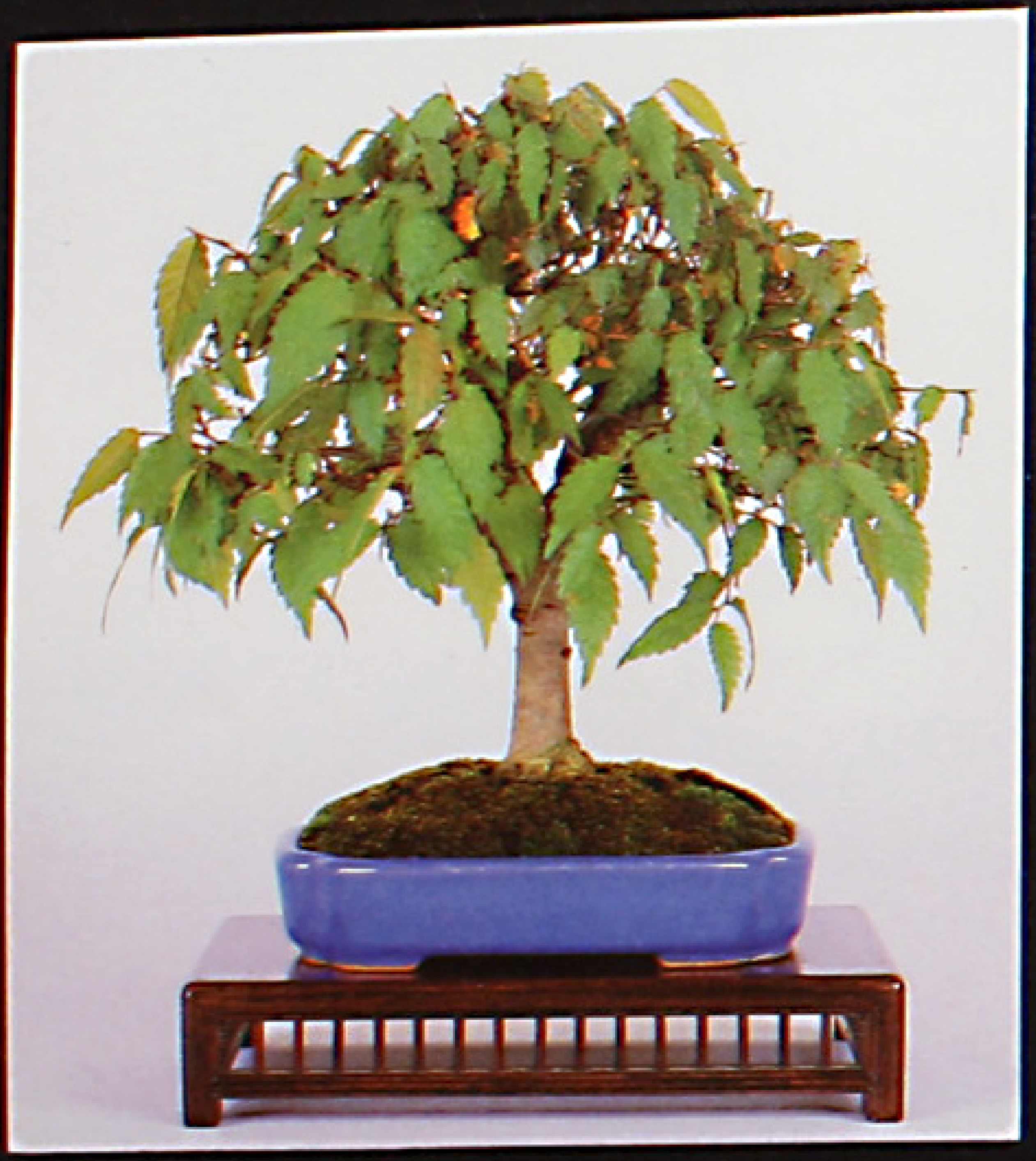
We will keep you posted on progress in these pages and hope you will join in this exciting adventure to create the world's first international museum of living sculpture. Please contact us for more information on how you can help.



◀ Hawthorn, Crataegus cuneata.
Height: 51 cm.

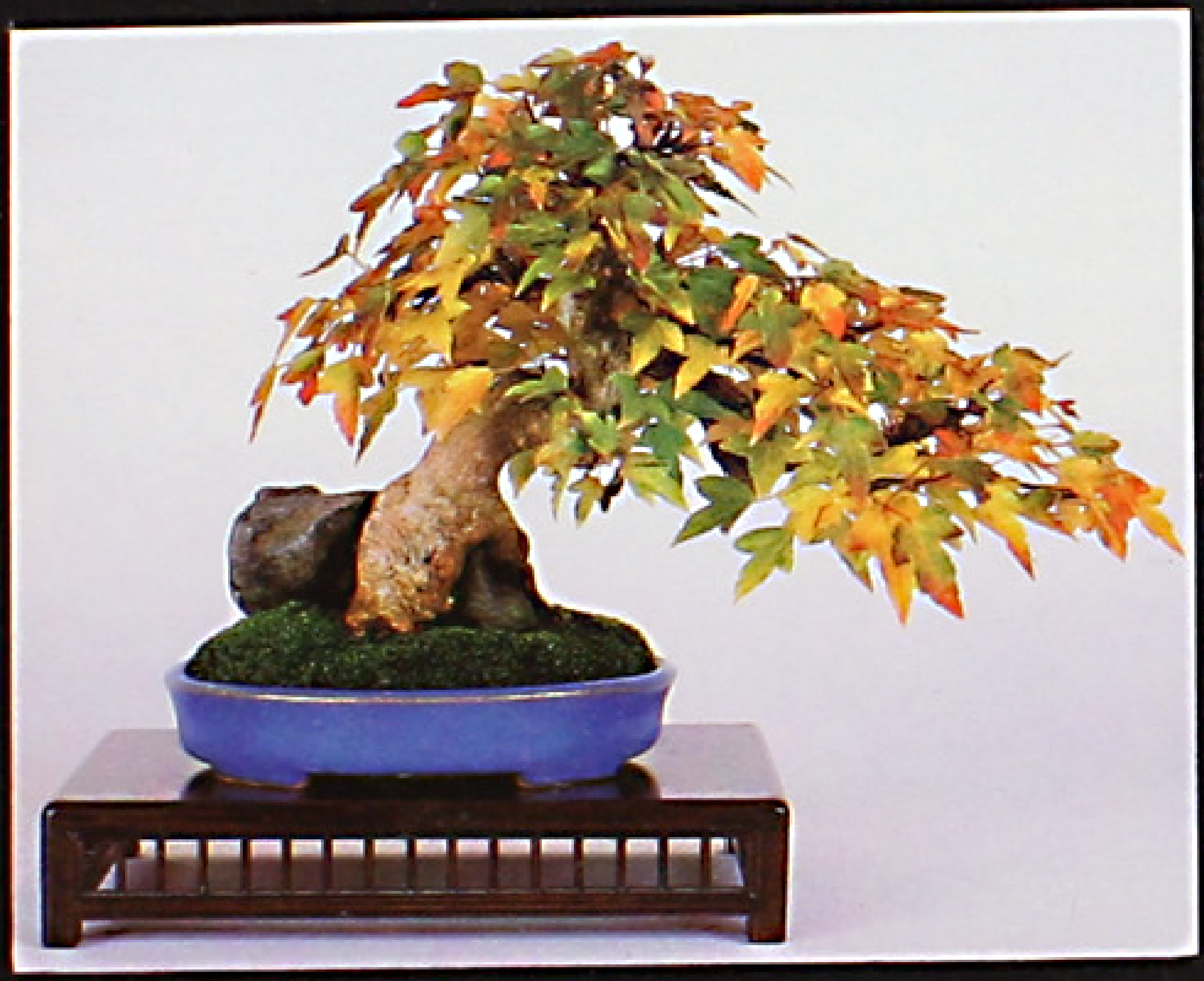
▼ Viburnum opulus. Height: 70 cm.





◀ Zelkova serrata.
Height: 17 cm.

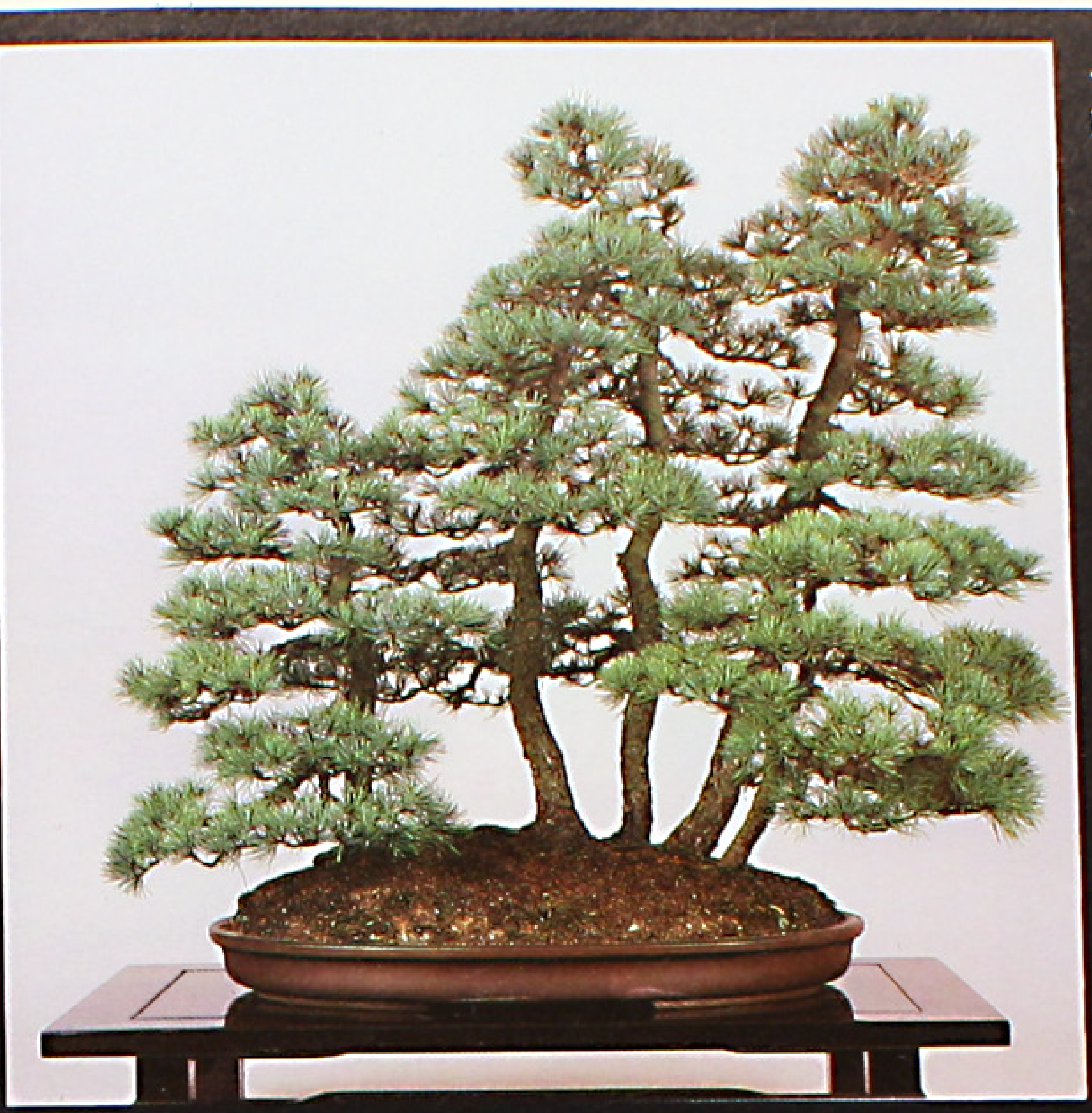
Trident Maple,
Acer buergeranum.
Height: 13 cm. ▶



GALLERY

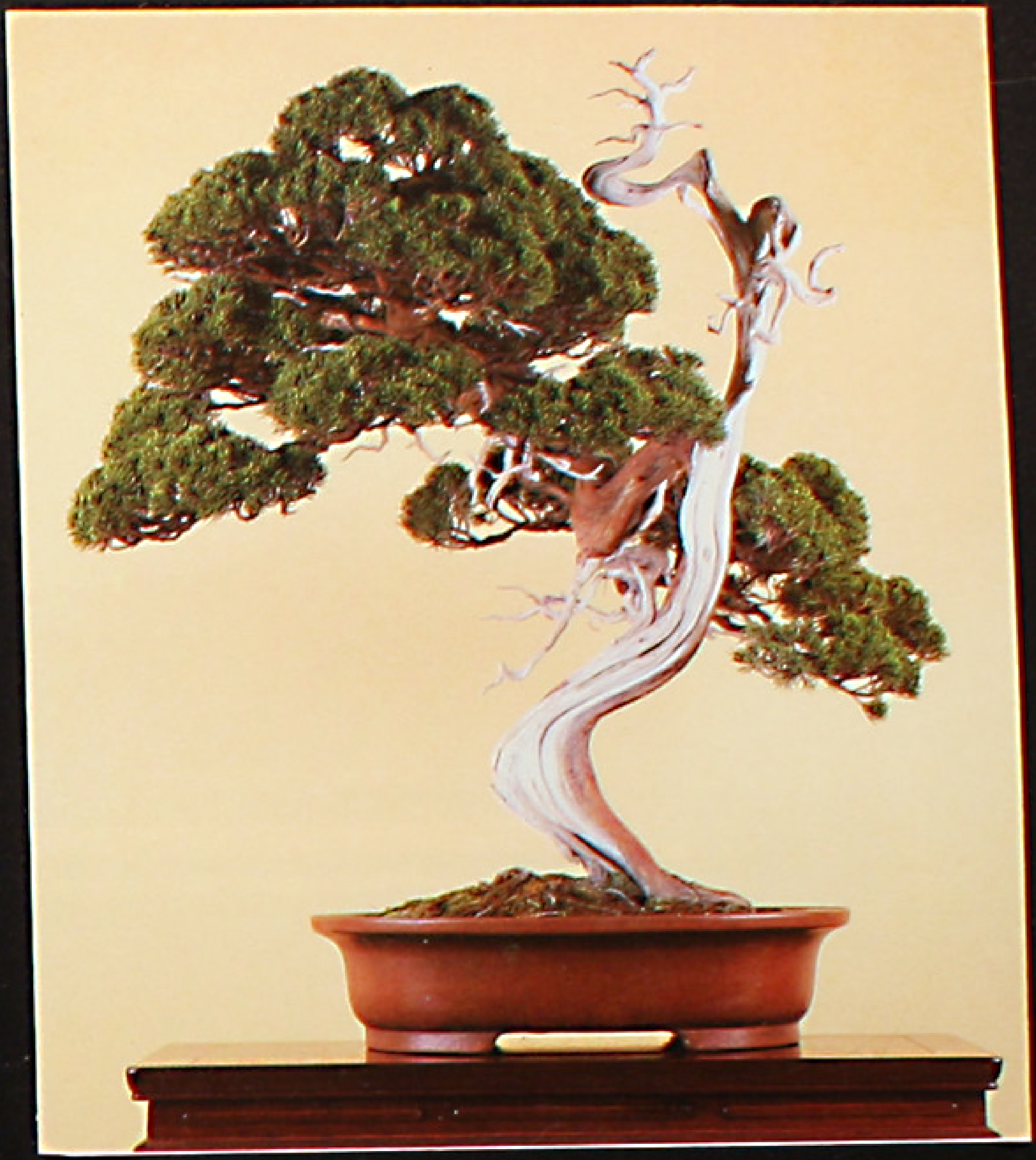
In this section, here and in upcoming issues, we will be presenting a selection of the best trees exhibited in Bonsai shows all over the world. We will also attempt to offer as complete a range as possible of those species capable of being cultivated as Bonsai. These photographs are meant for study and appreciation, and too provide inspiration for the creation of bonsai everywhere.

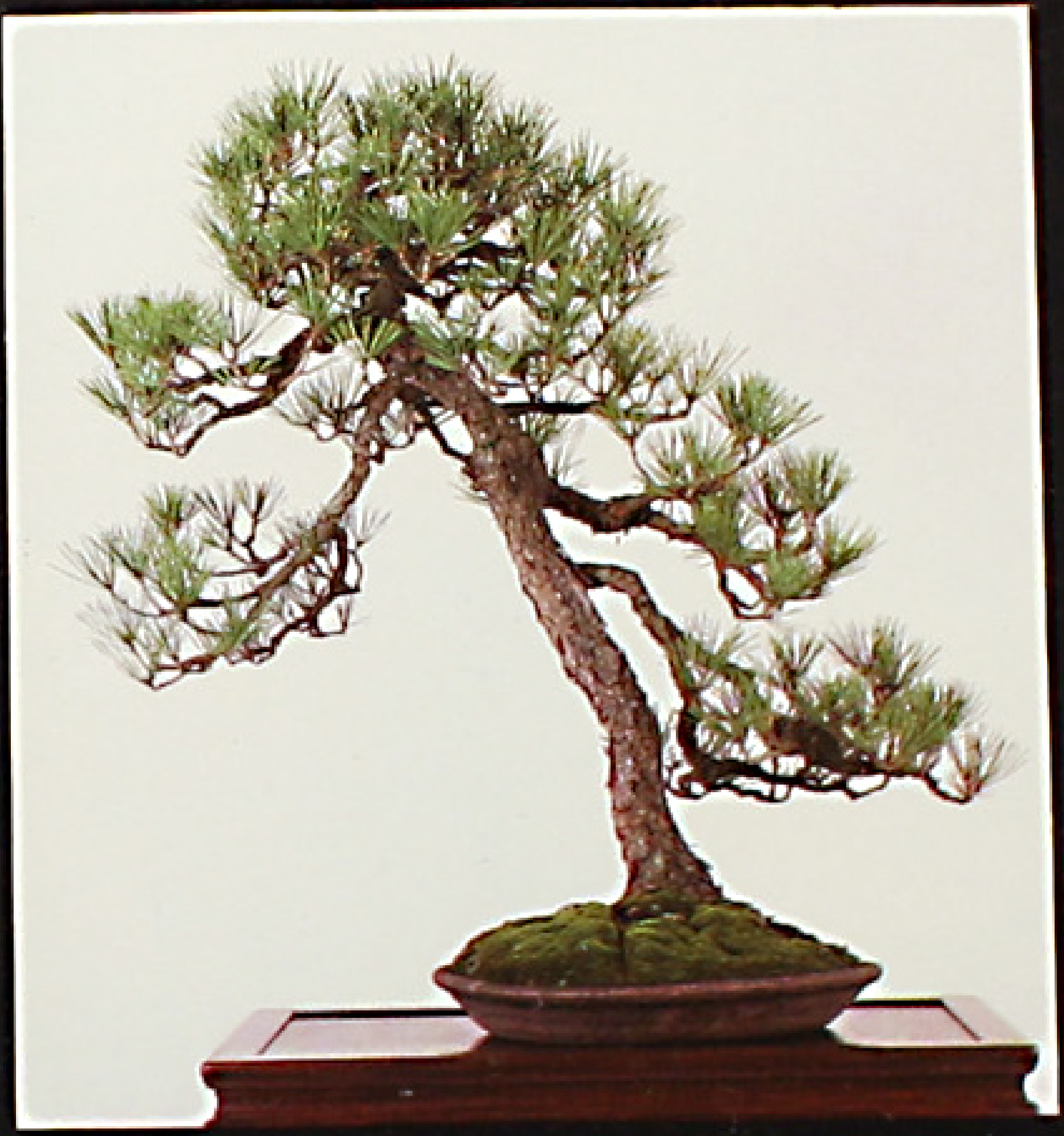
Previous page:
Japanese black pine, Pinus thunbergii.
Height: 93 cm. It is called "Black Dragon."



◀ Japanese white pine, Pinus parviflora pentaphylla. Height: 64 cm.

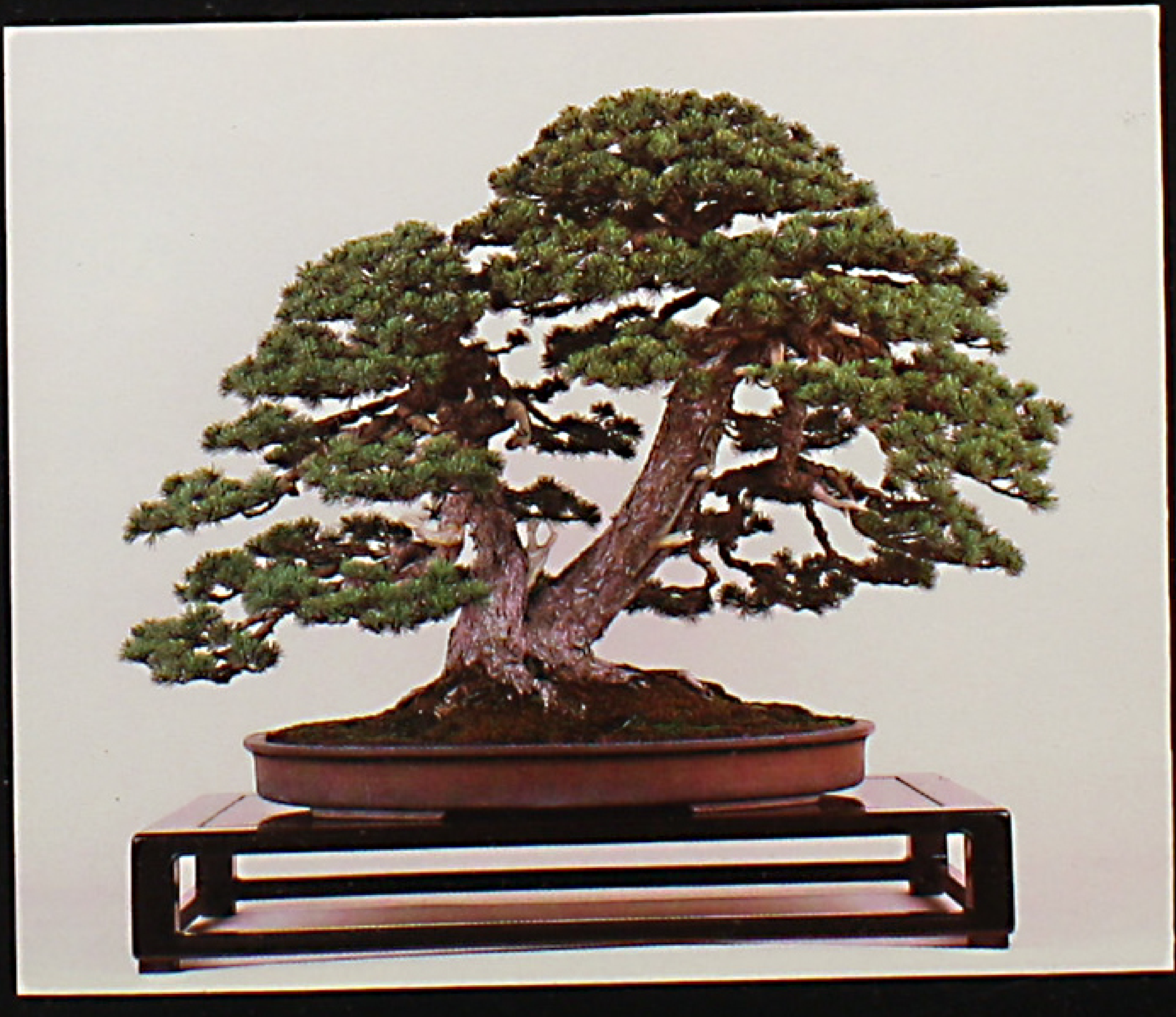
▼ Juniperus chinensis. Height: 73 cm.



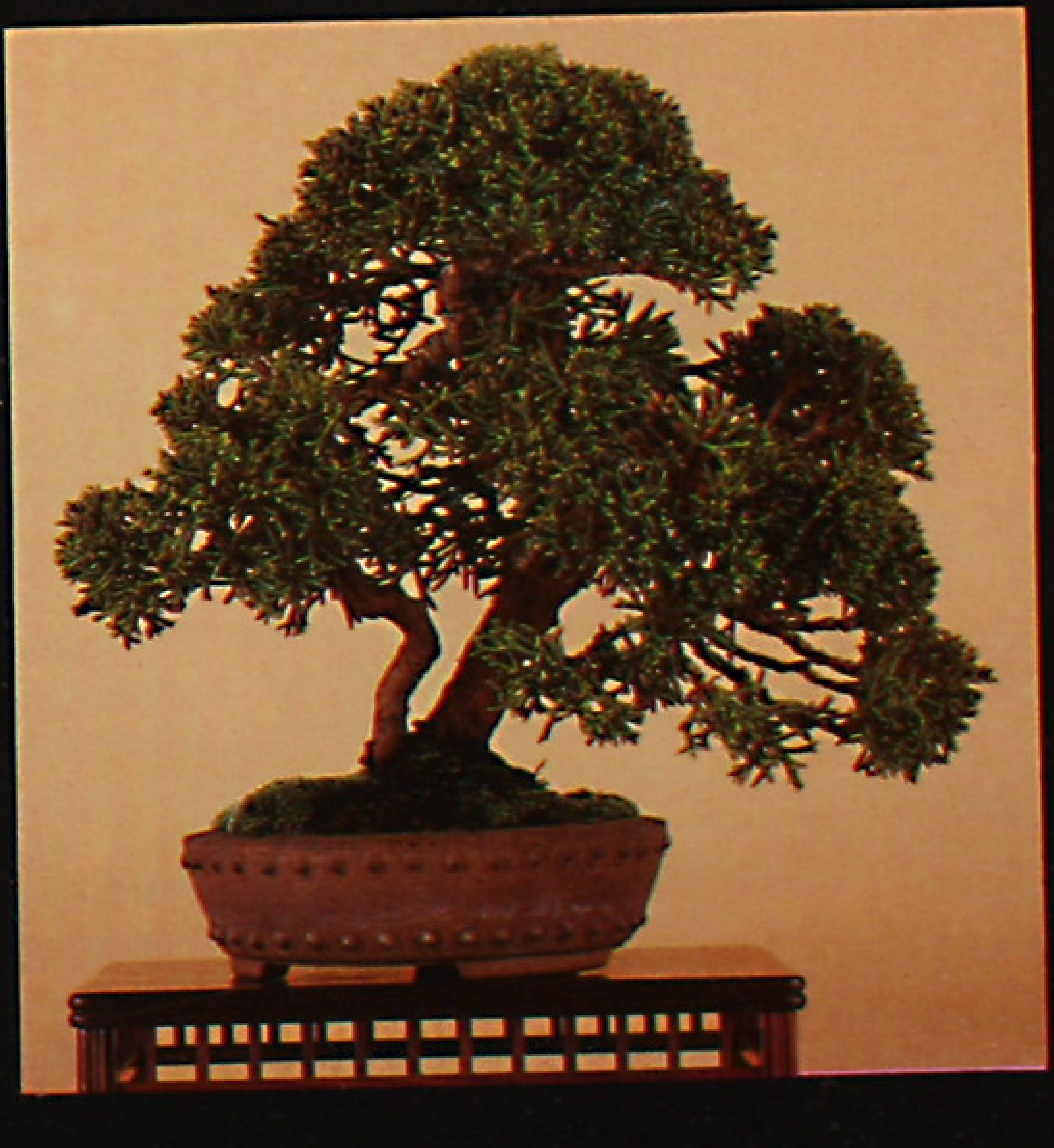


◀ Red pine, Pinus densiflora. Height: 58 cm.

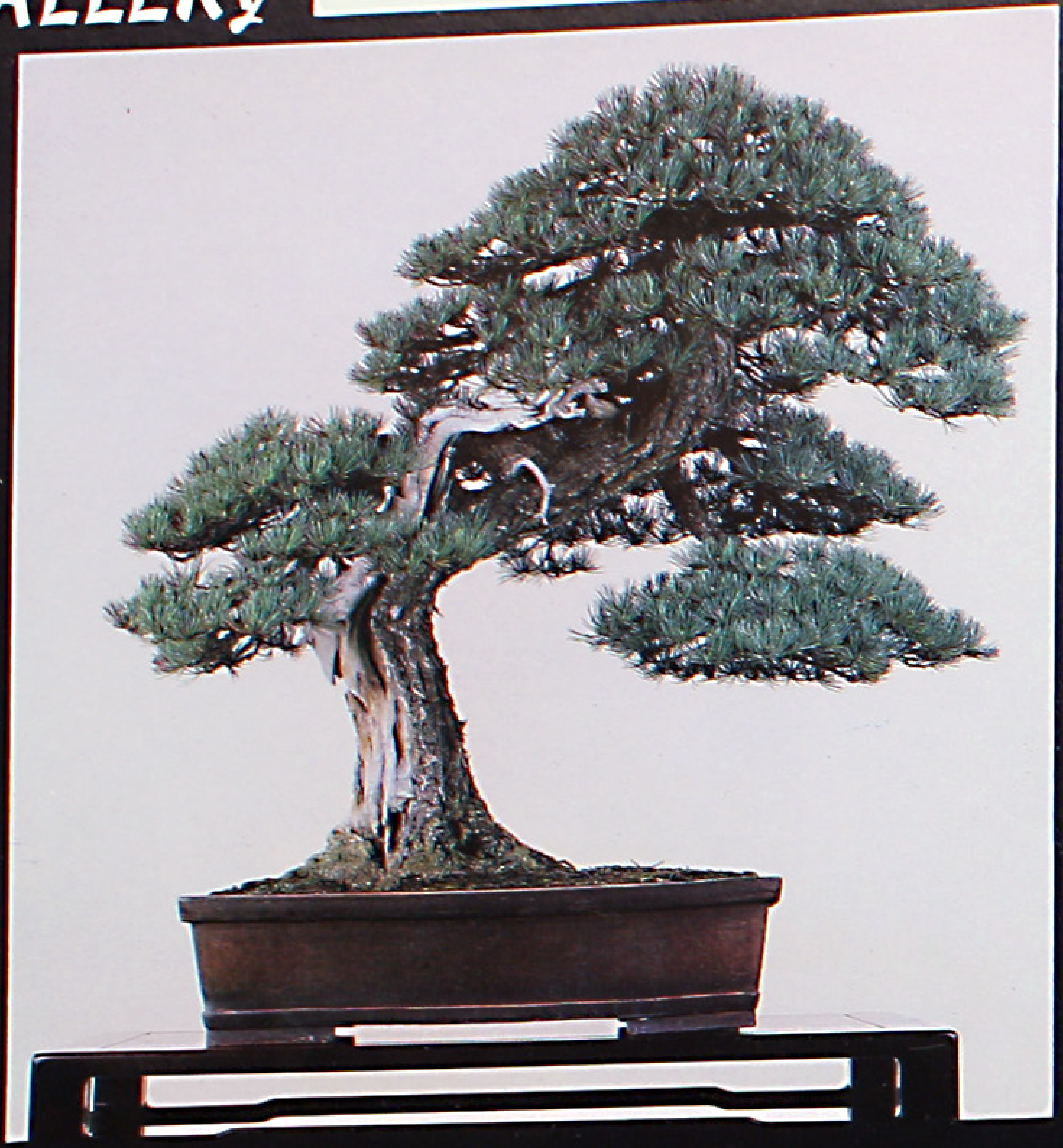
Pinus parviflora pentaphylla.
▼ Height: 70 cm.



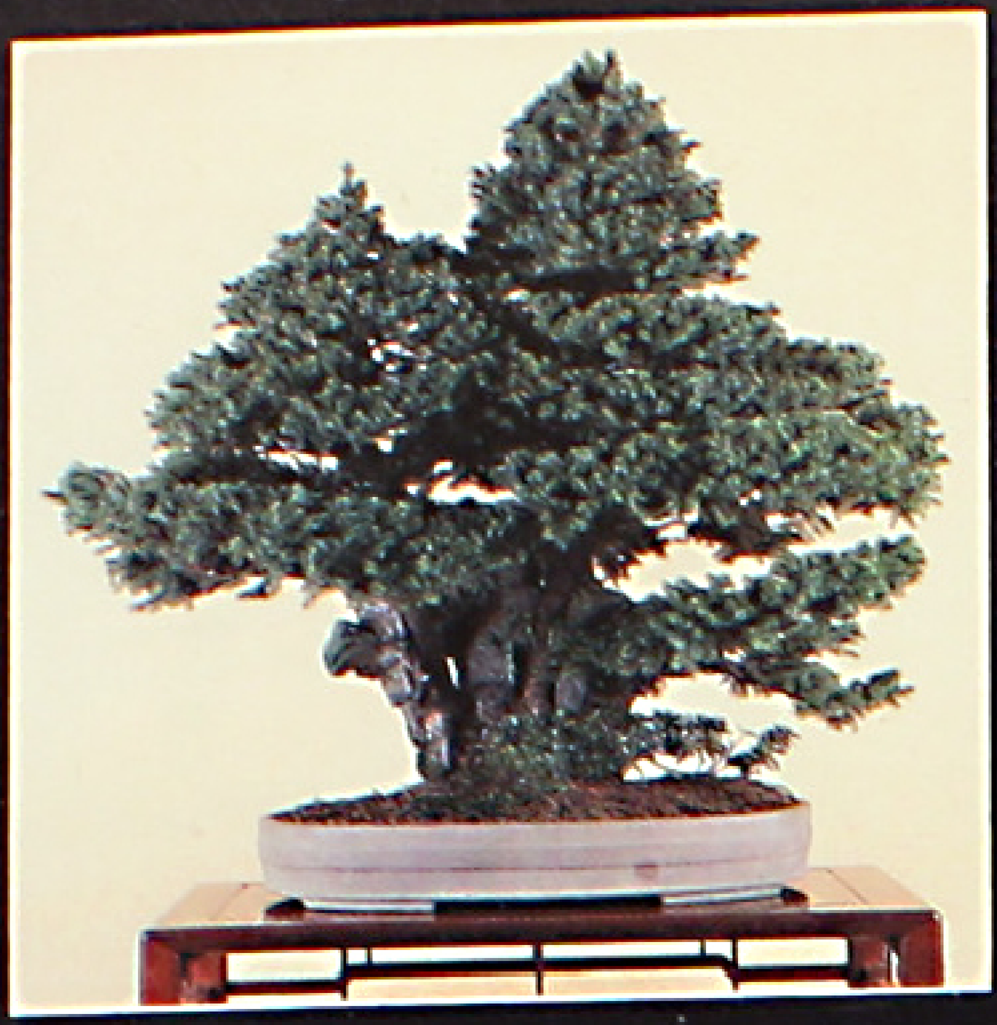
▼ Juniperus chinensis. Height: 18 cm.



GALLERY

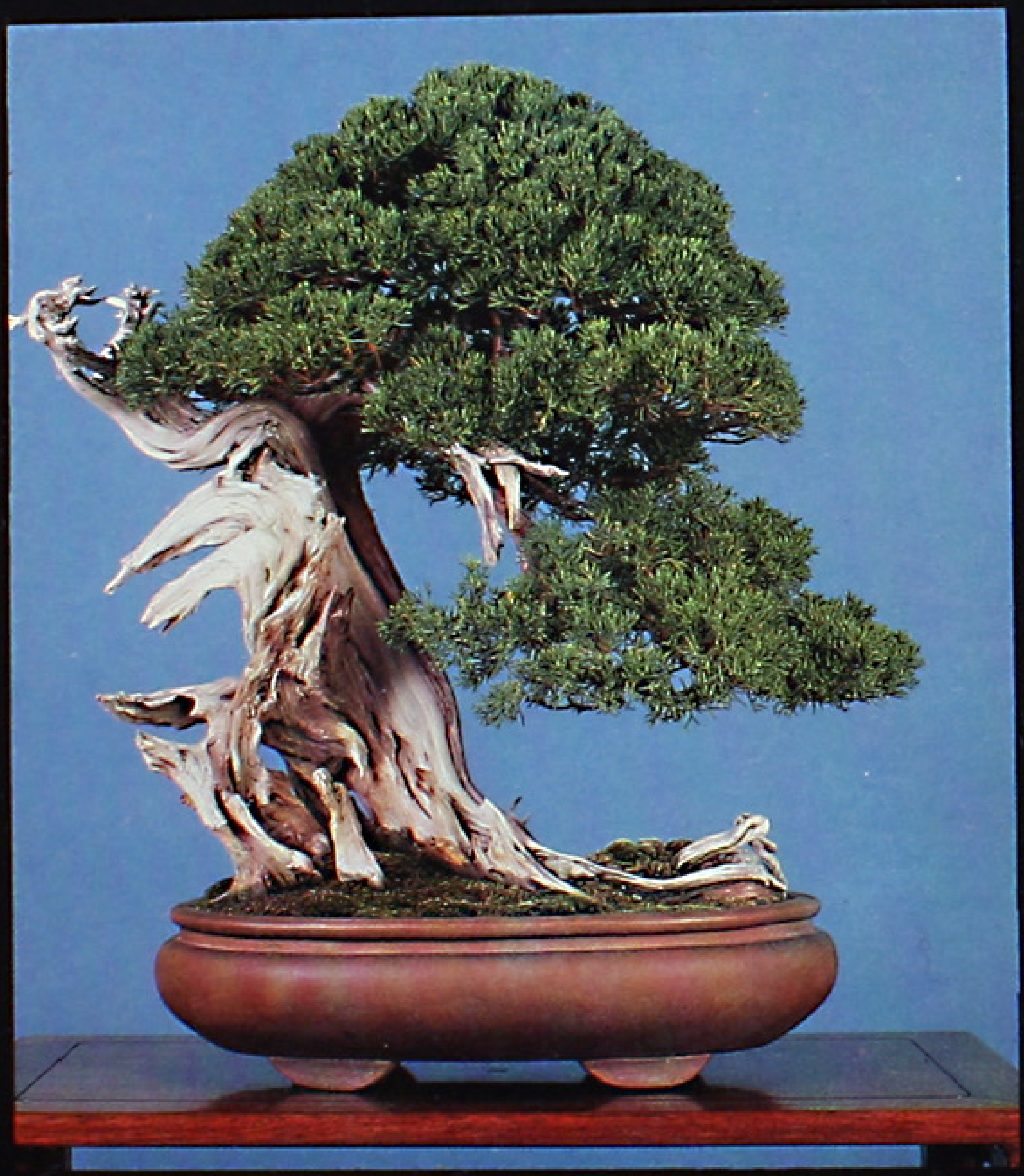


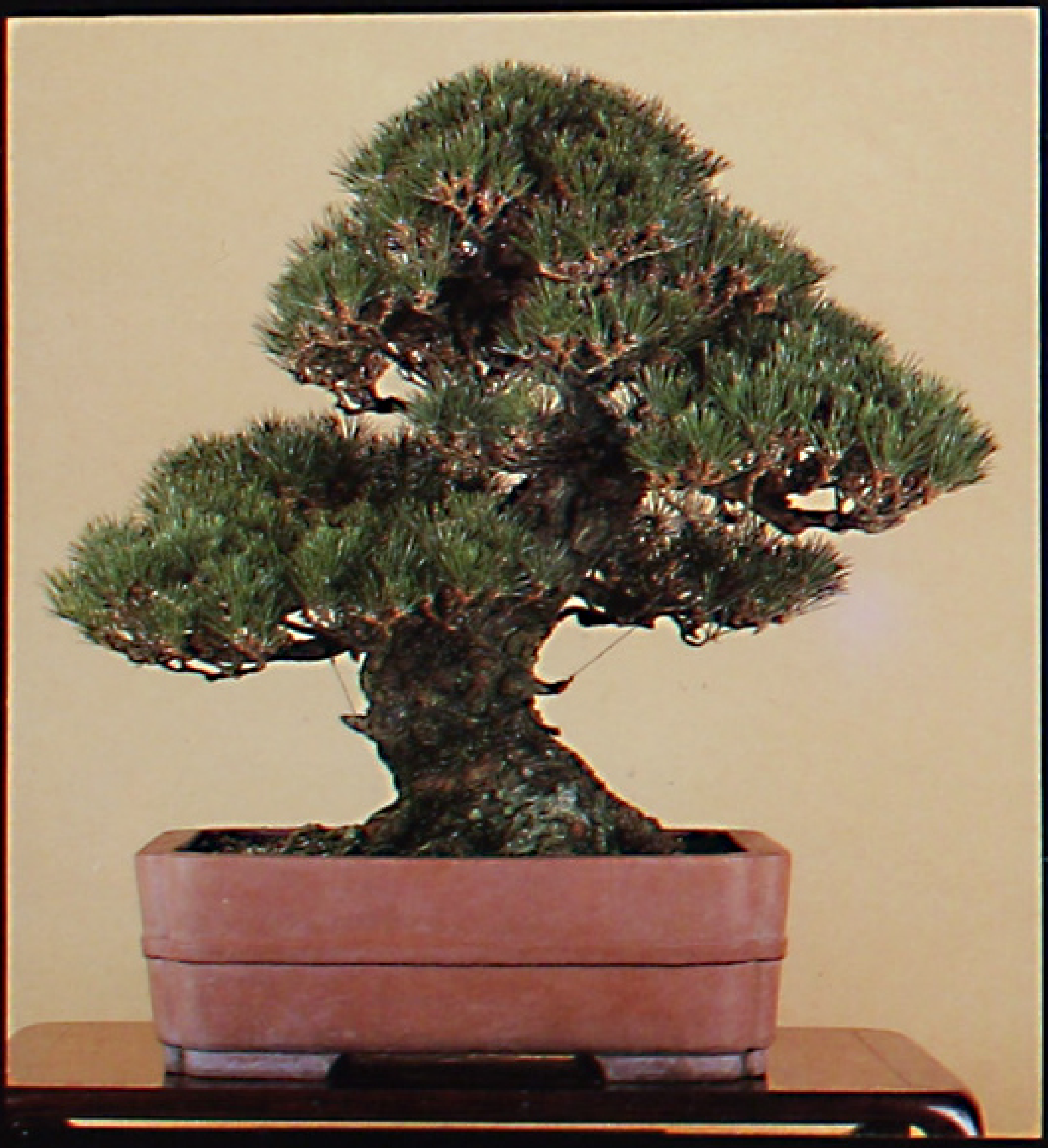
◀ Pinus parviflora pentaphylla. Height: 82 cm.



▲ Picea glehnii. Height: 78 cm.

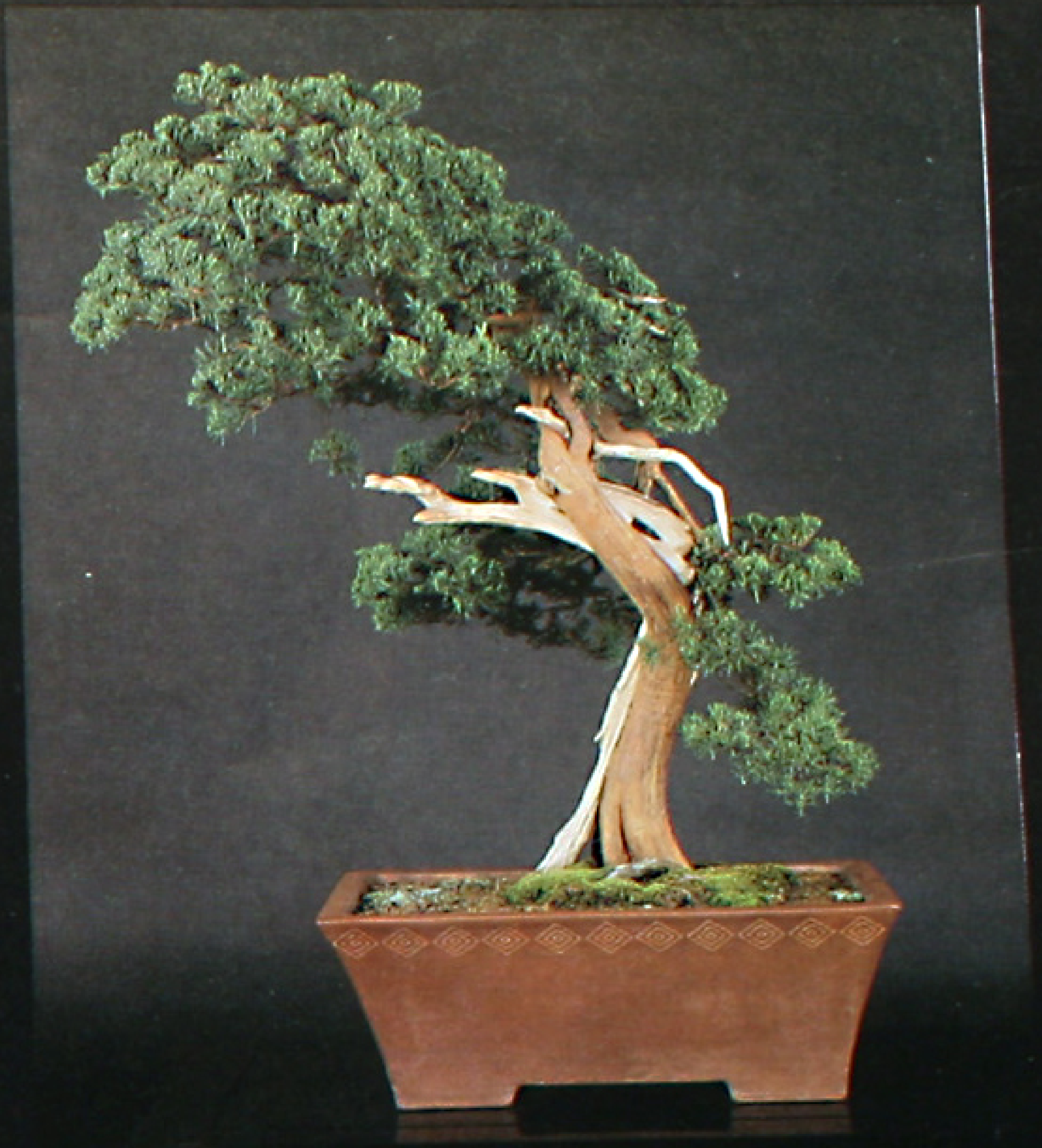
Juniperus chinensis. Height: 48 cm. ▶



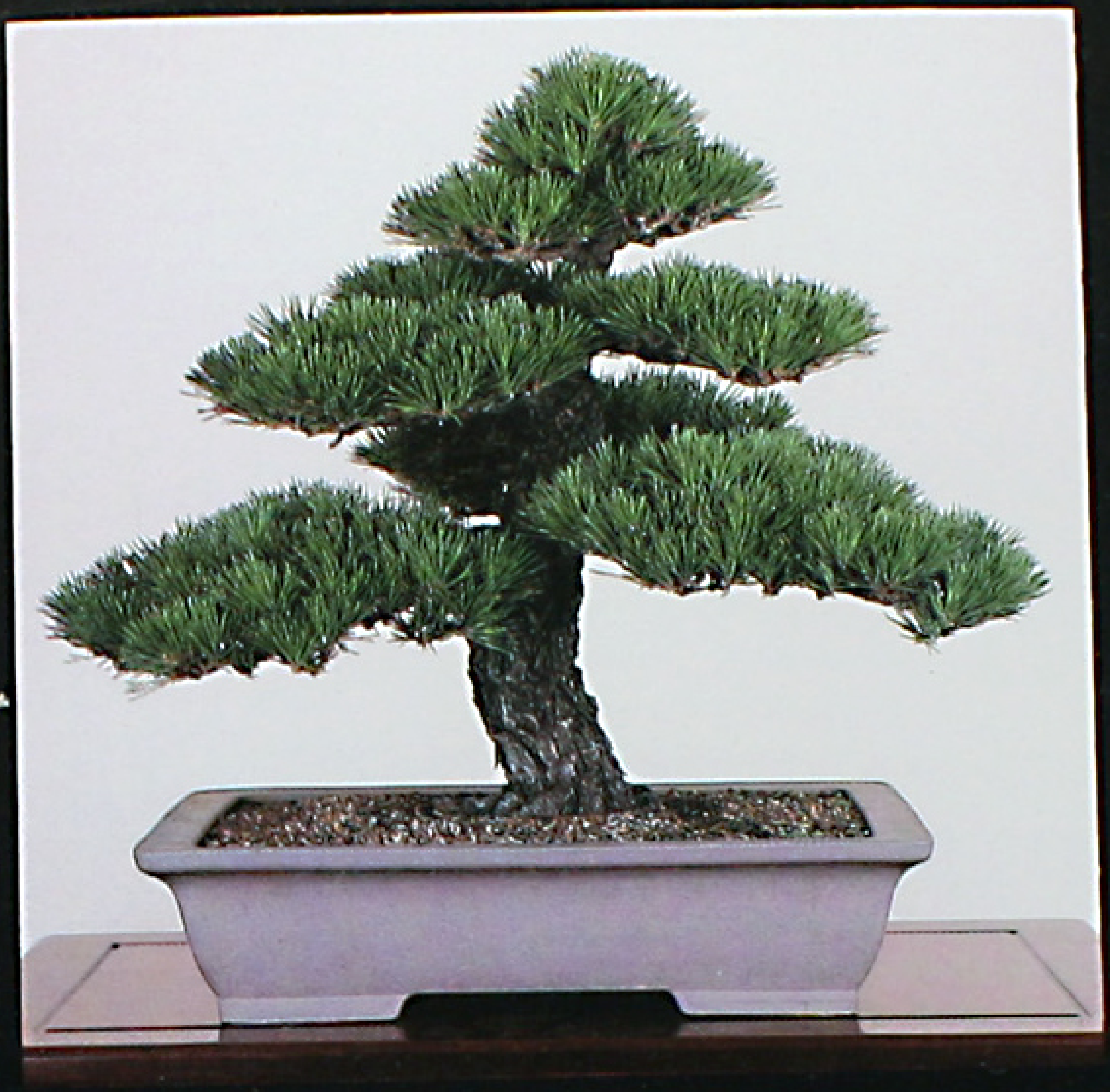


◀ Pinus thunbergii. Height: 56 cm.

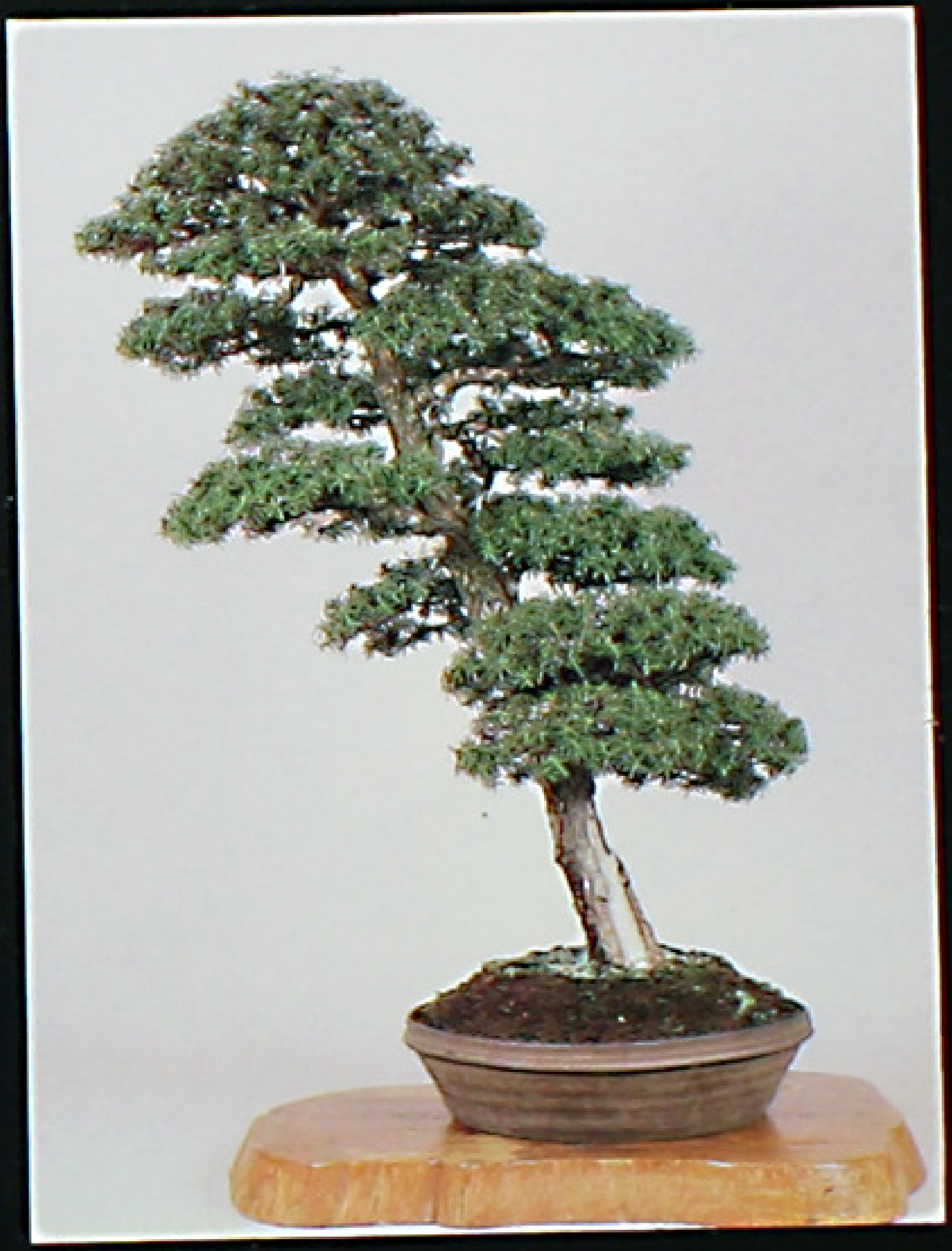
Juniperus chinensis. Height: 67 cm. ▶

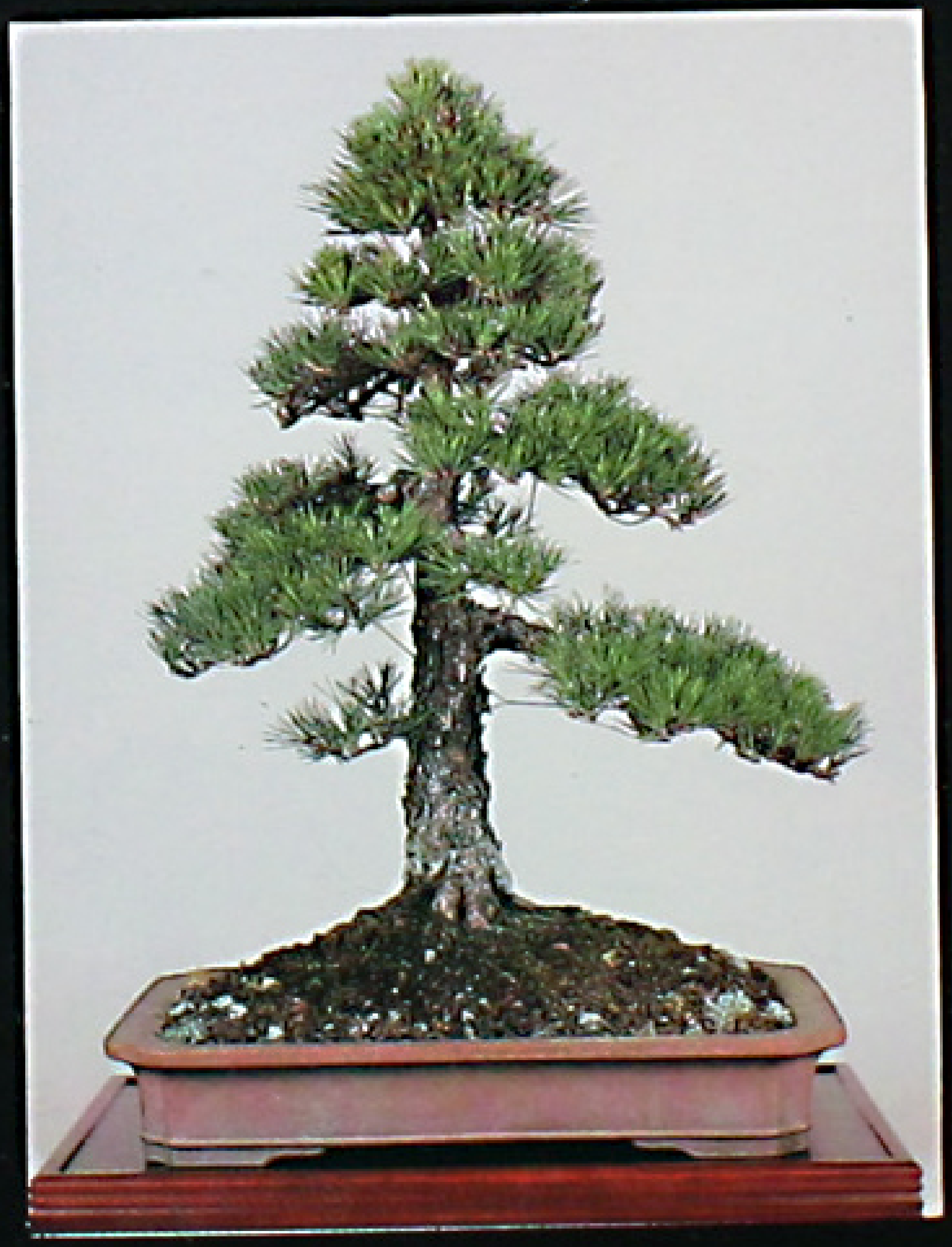


▼ Pinus thunbergii. Height: 47 cm.



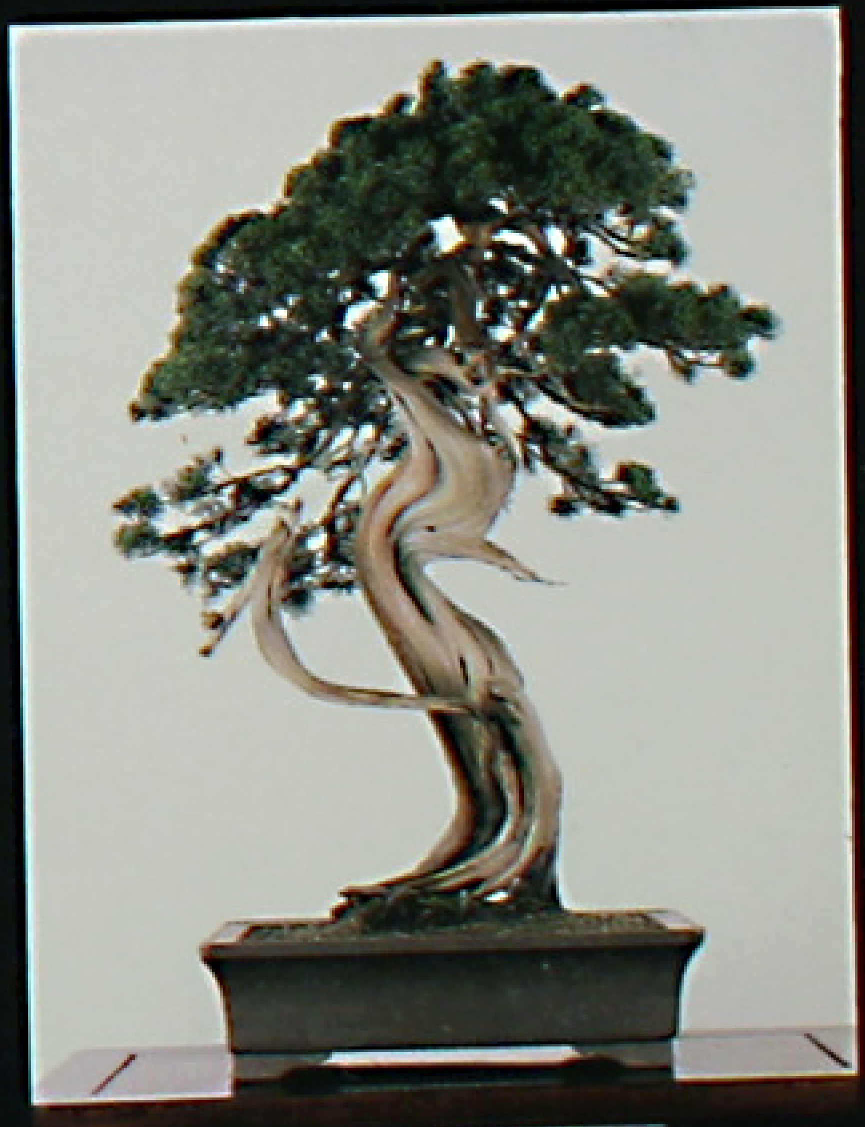
◀ Juniperus rigida.
Height: 83 cm.

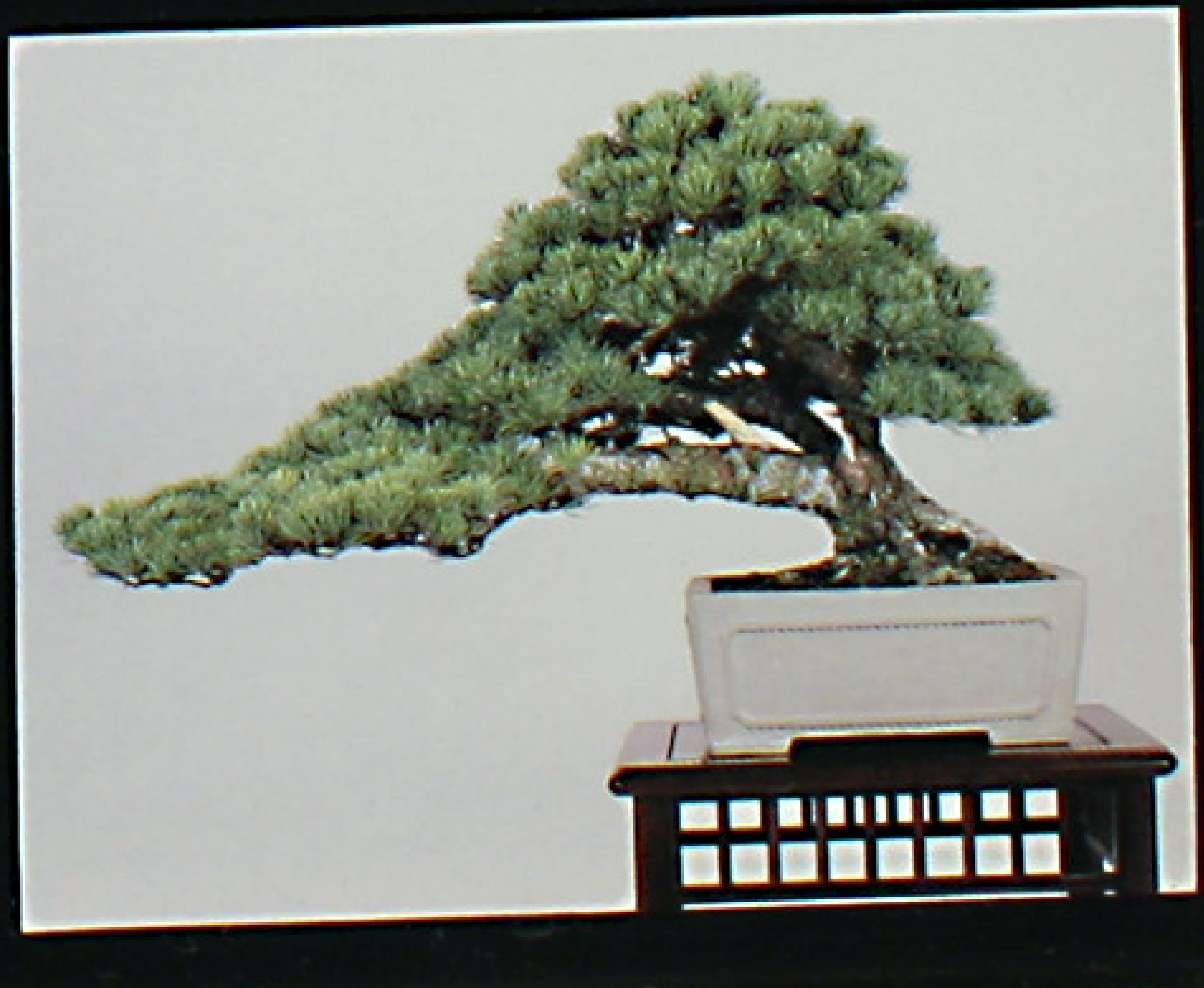




▲ Pinus thunbergii.
Height: 62 cm.

Juniperus chinensis.
▼ Height: 80 cm.





Pinus parviflora pentaphylla. ▶
Height: 76 cm.

GALLERY

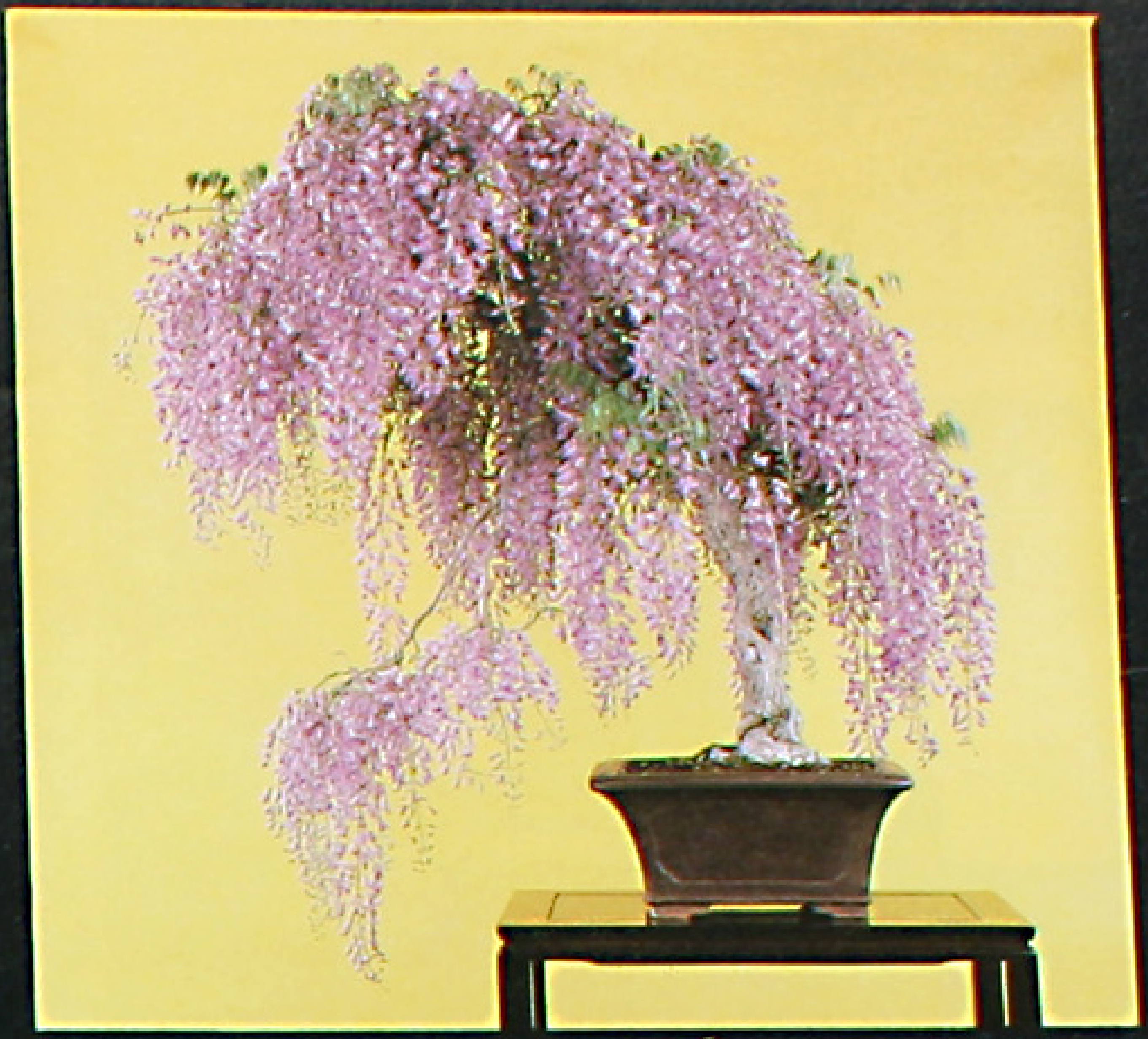
◀ Acer palmatum atropurpureum. Height: 62 cm.

Acer buergeranum. Height: 16 cm. ▶

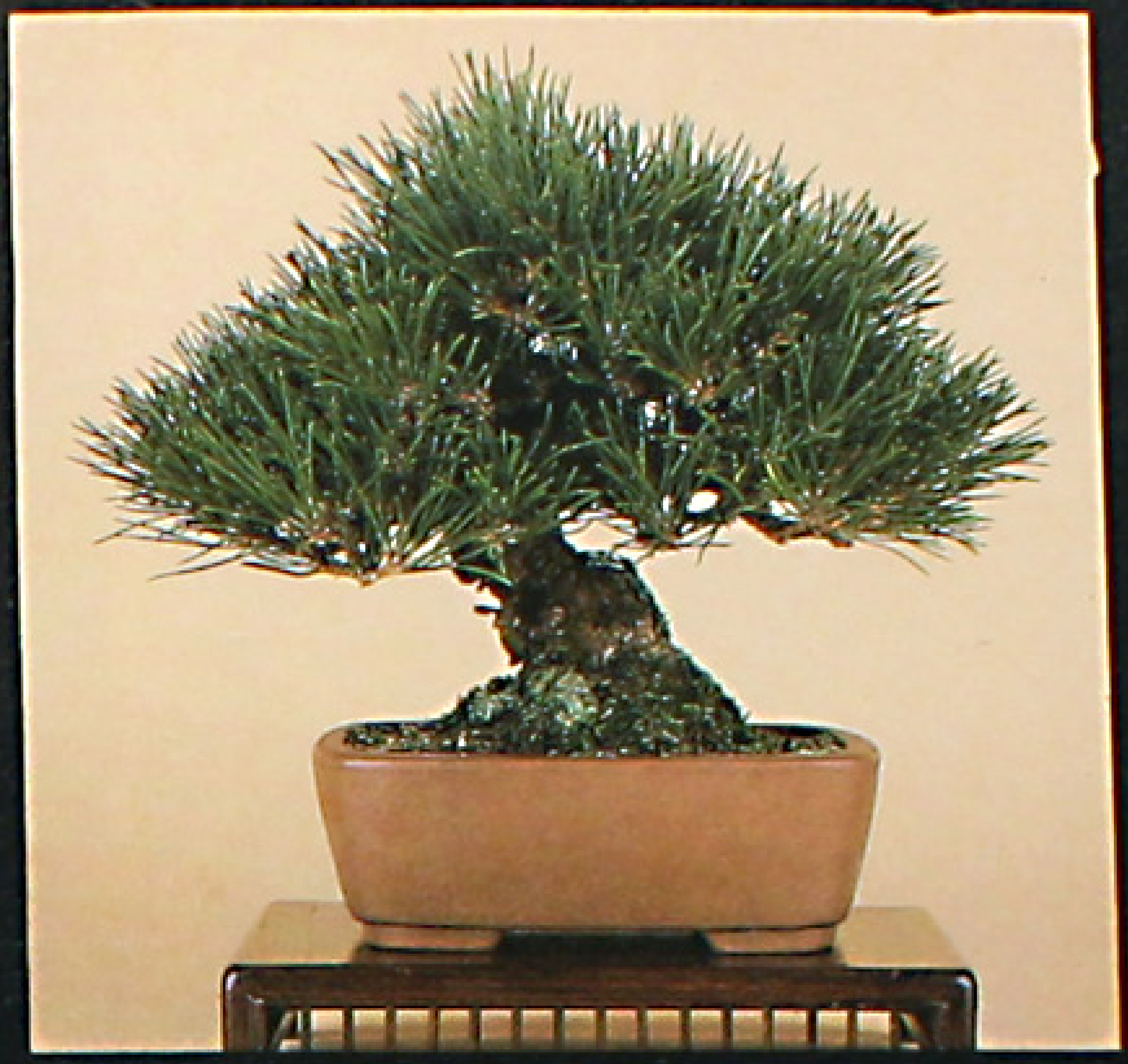
◀ Nandina domestica. Height: 47 cm.

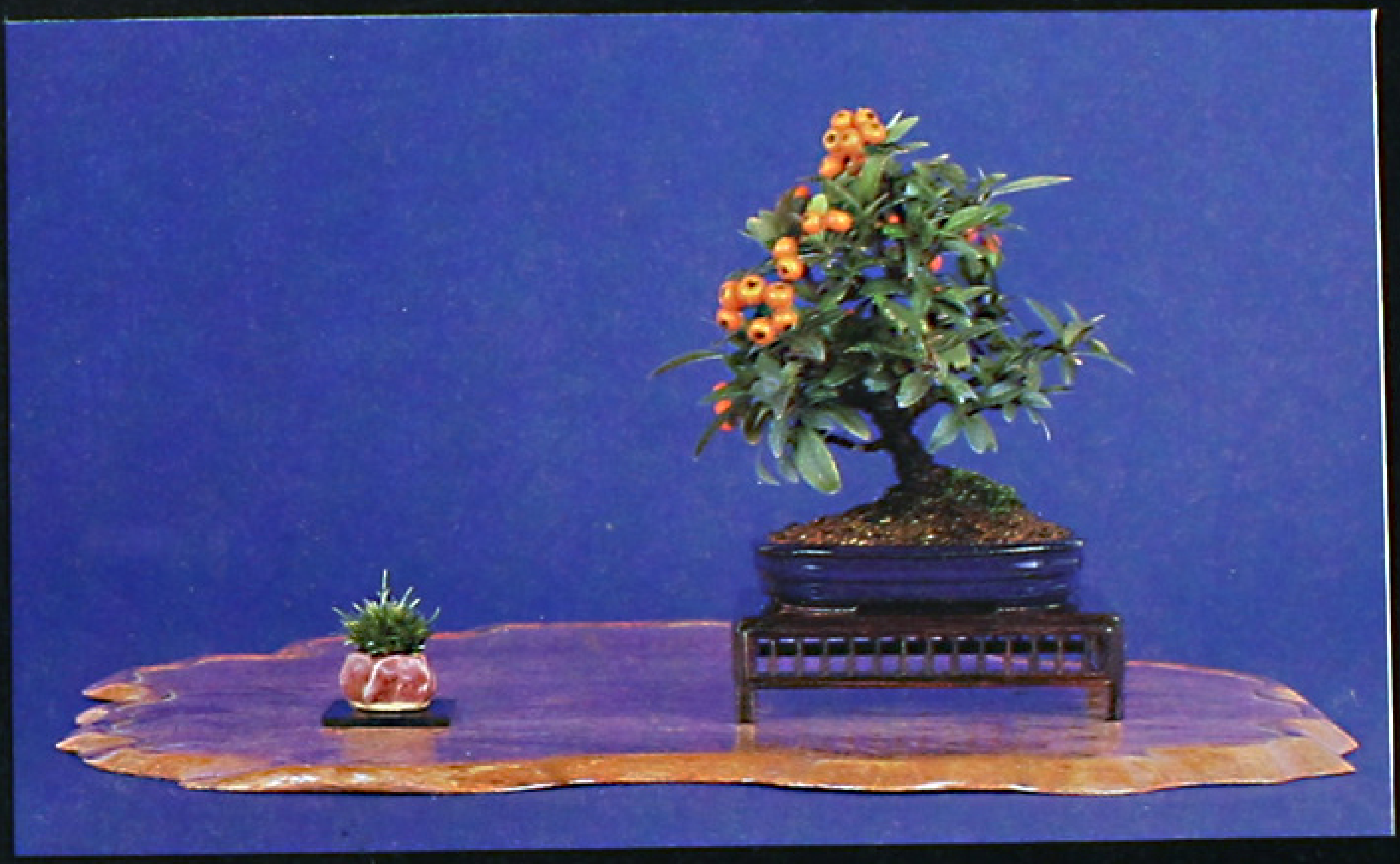
Trachelospermum asiaticum. Height: 11 cm. ▶

Wistaria sinensis. Height: 80 cm. ▶



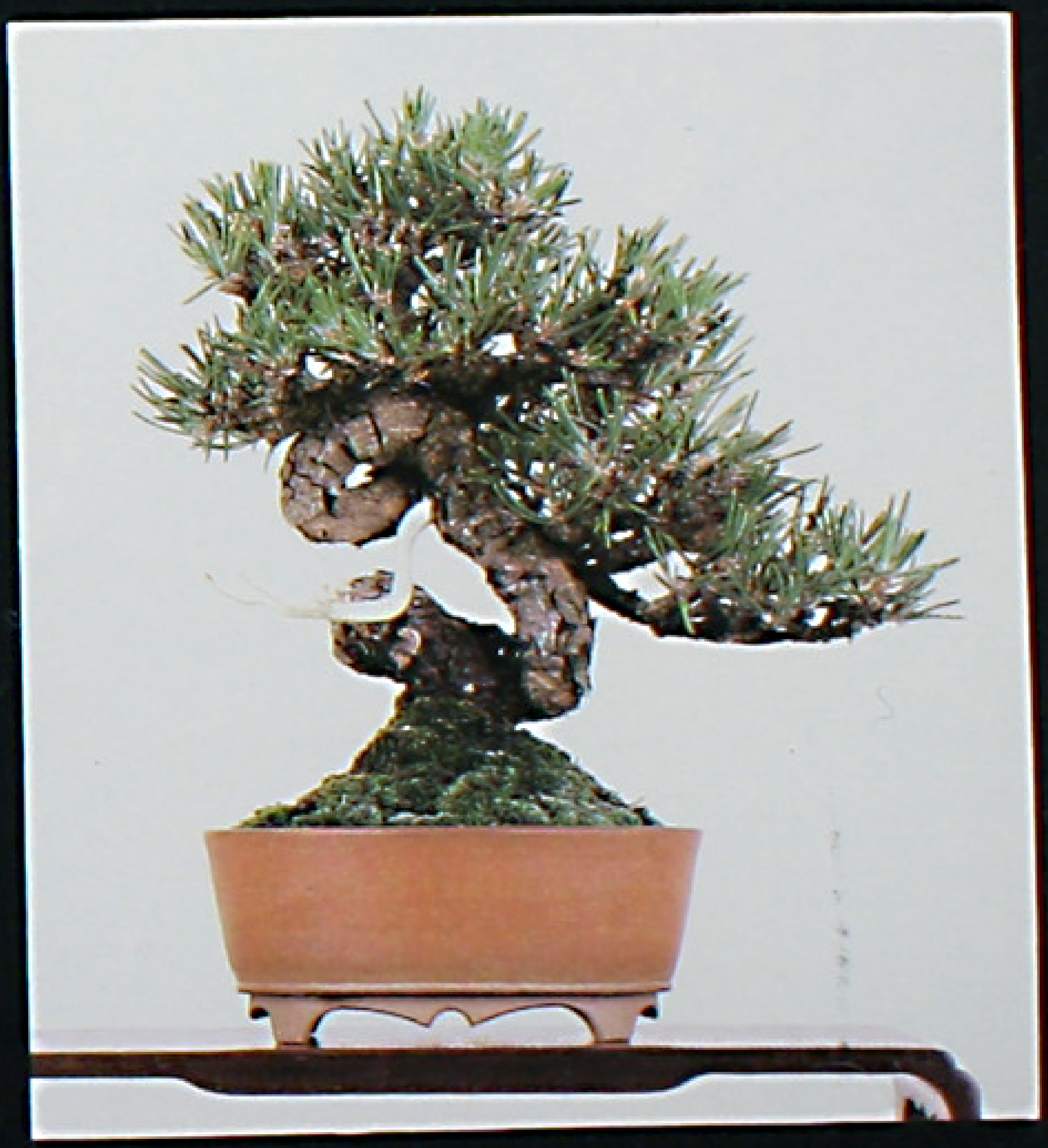
Pinus thunbergii.
Height: 17 cm. ▶

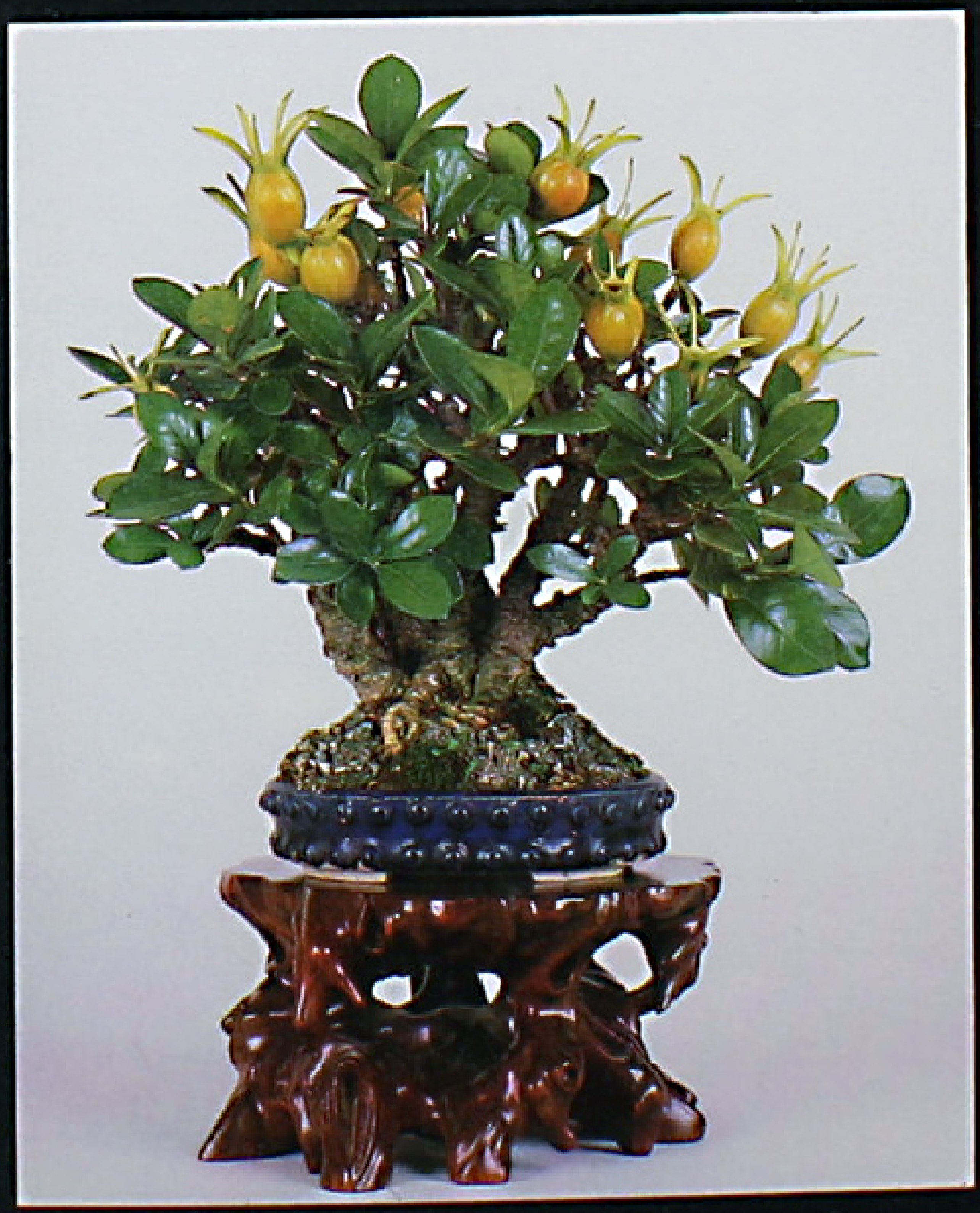




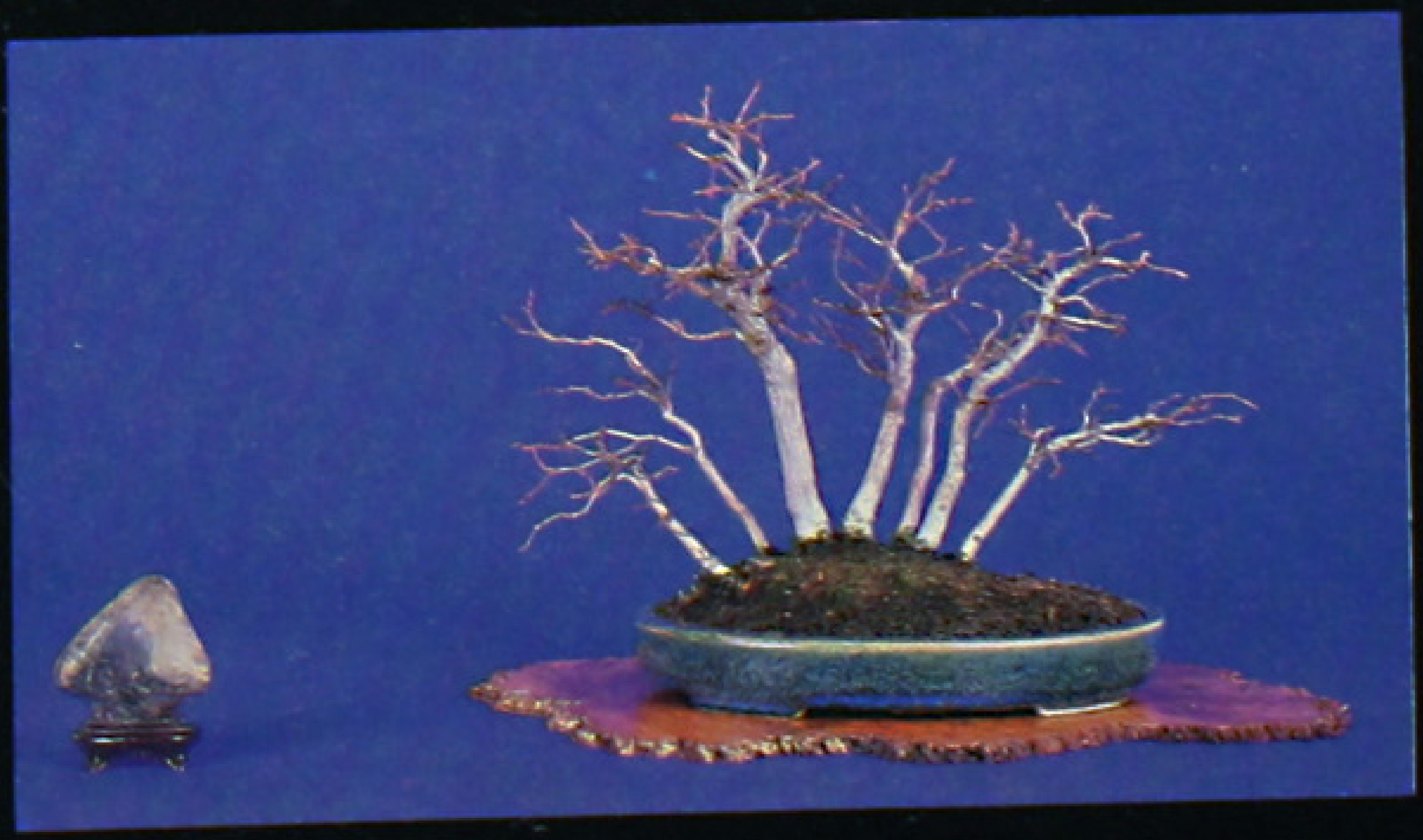
◀ Pyracantha duvalii. Height: 15.5 cm.

▼ Pinus thunbergii. Height: 20 cm.





◀ Psidium guajava.
Height: 15 cm.



◀ Carpinus turczaninovii.
Height: 17 cm.

GALLERY

◀ Quince, Pseudocydonia sinensis. Height: 56 cm.

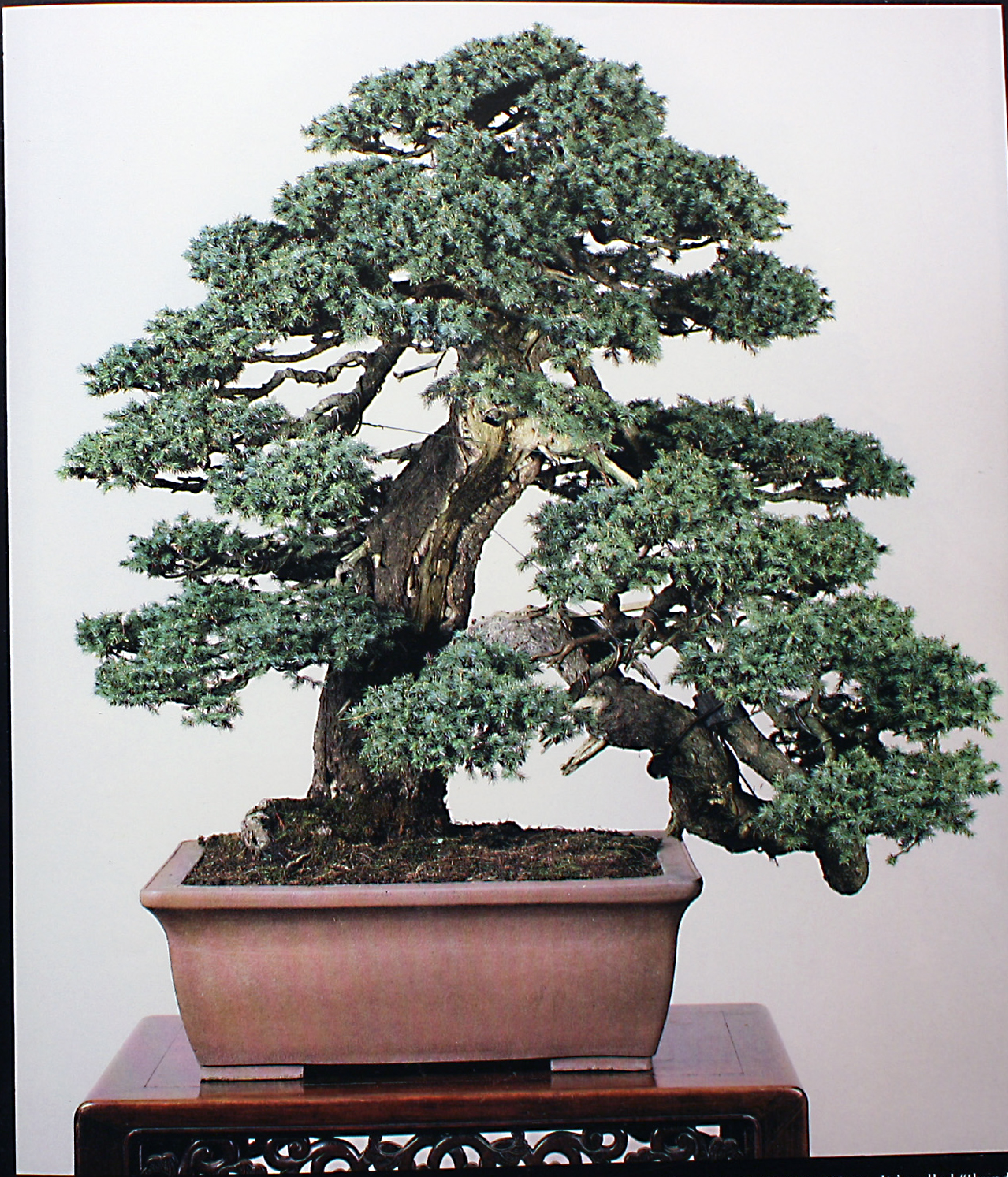
◀ Quince, Cydonia sinensis. Height: 81 cm.

Gingko biloba. Height: 68 cm. ▼

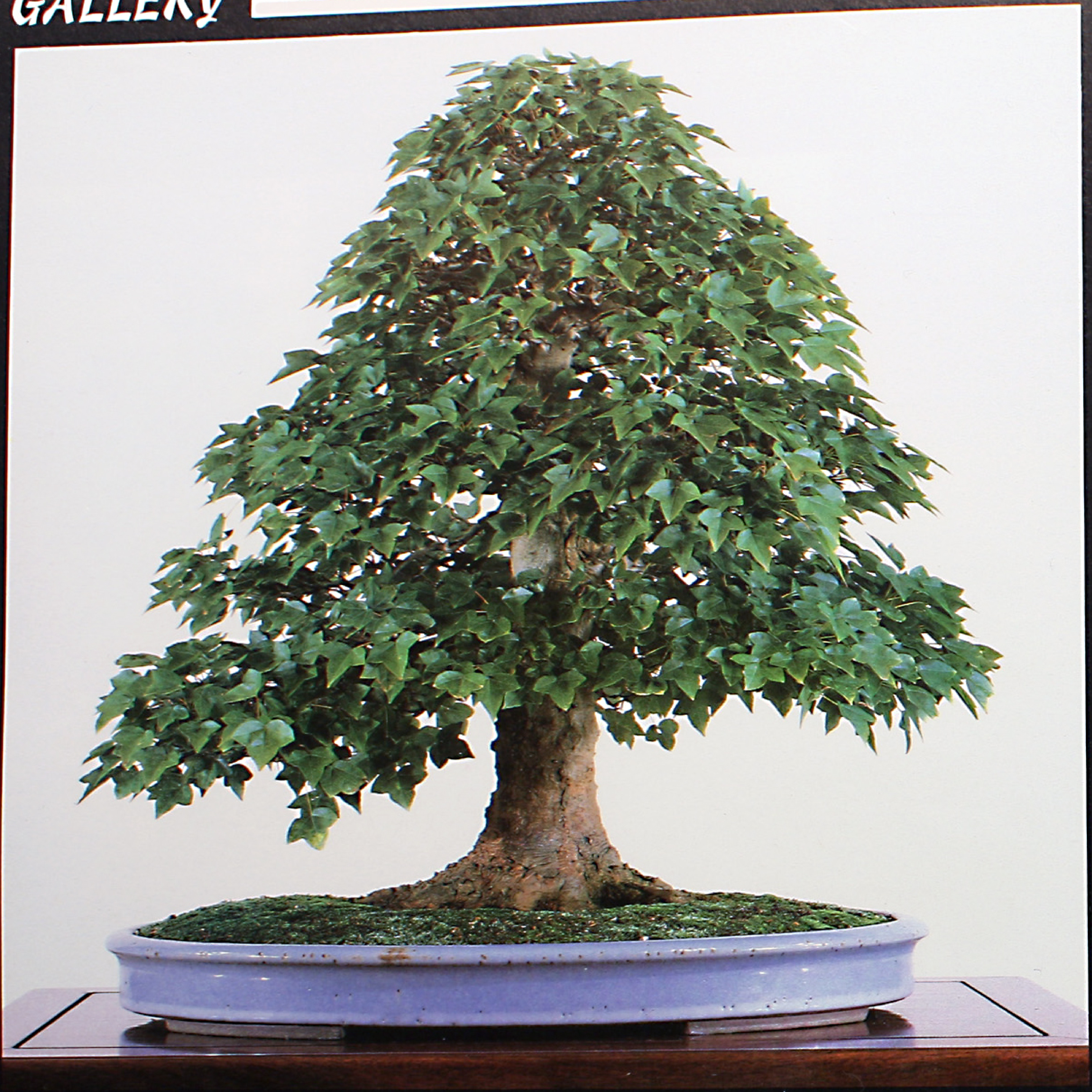
Pomegranate, Punica granatum. Height: 62 cm. ▶

◀ Rubus ideaeus. Height: 55 cm.

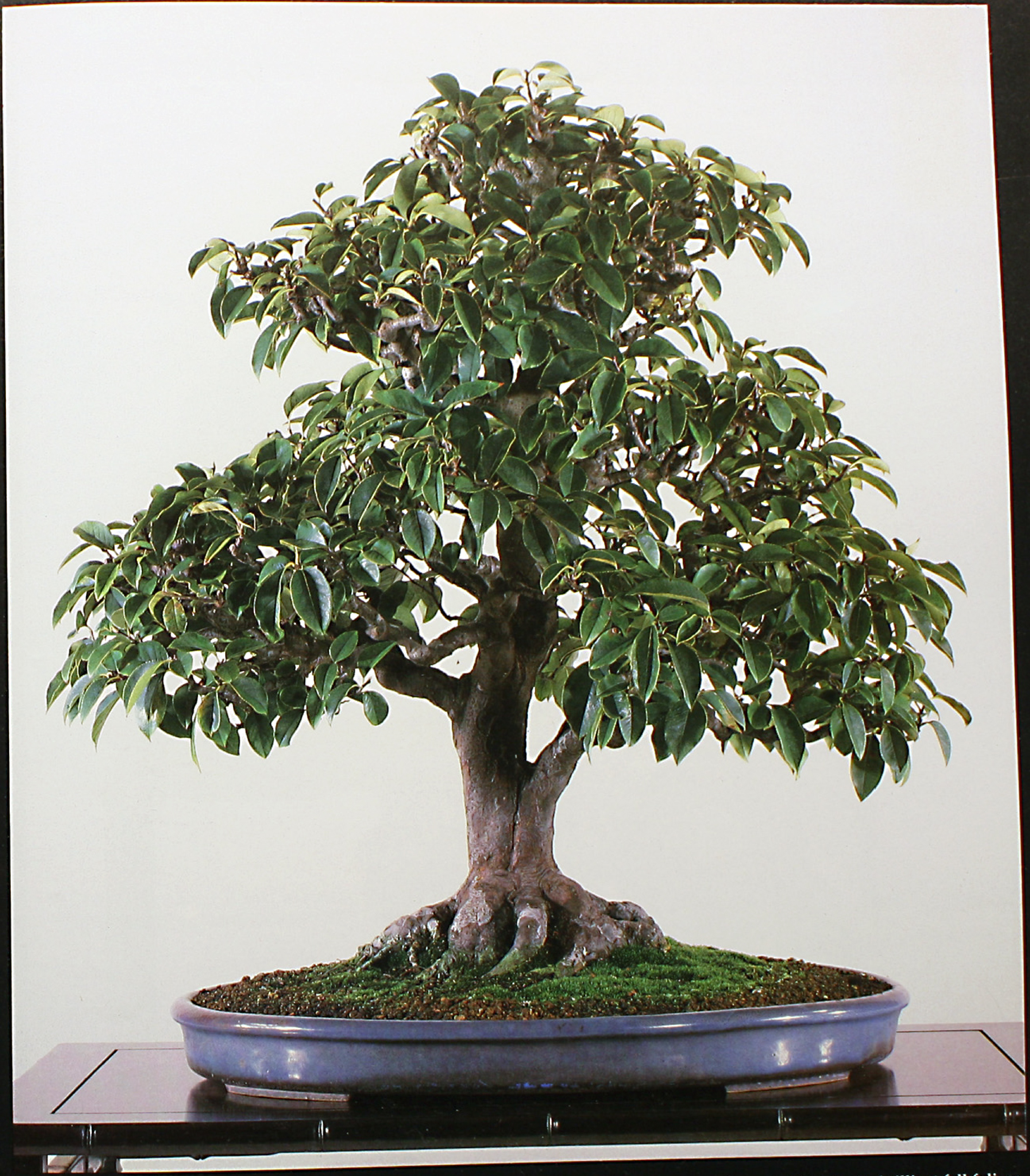
Cydonia sinensis Height: 65cm ▶



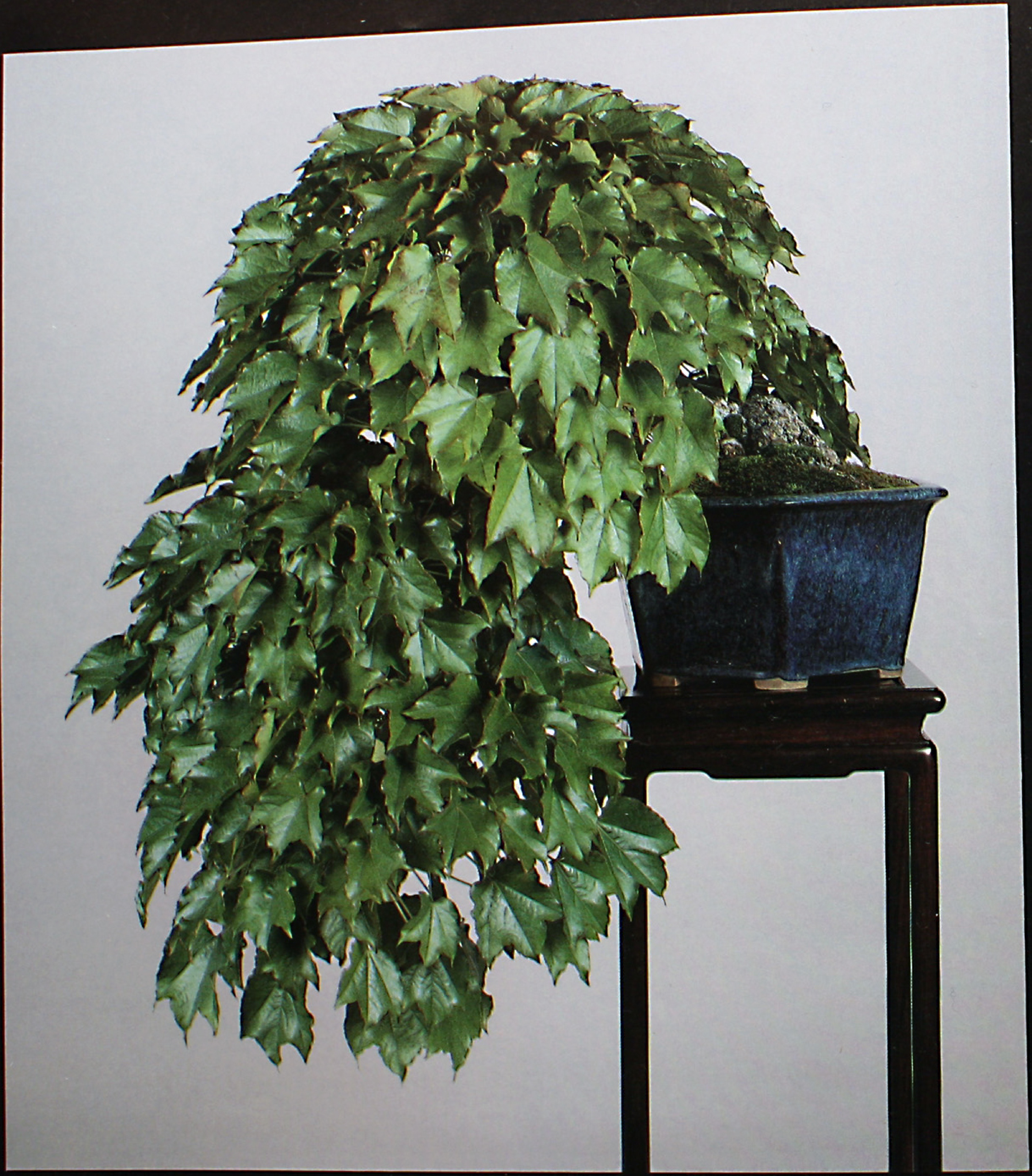
Ezo spruce, Picea glehnii. Height: 100 cm. It is called "thunder."



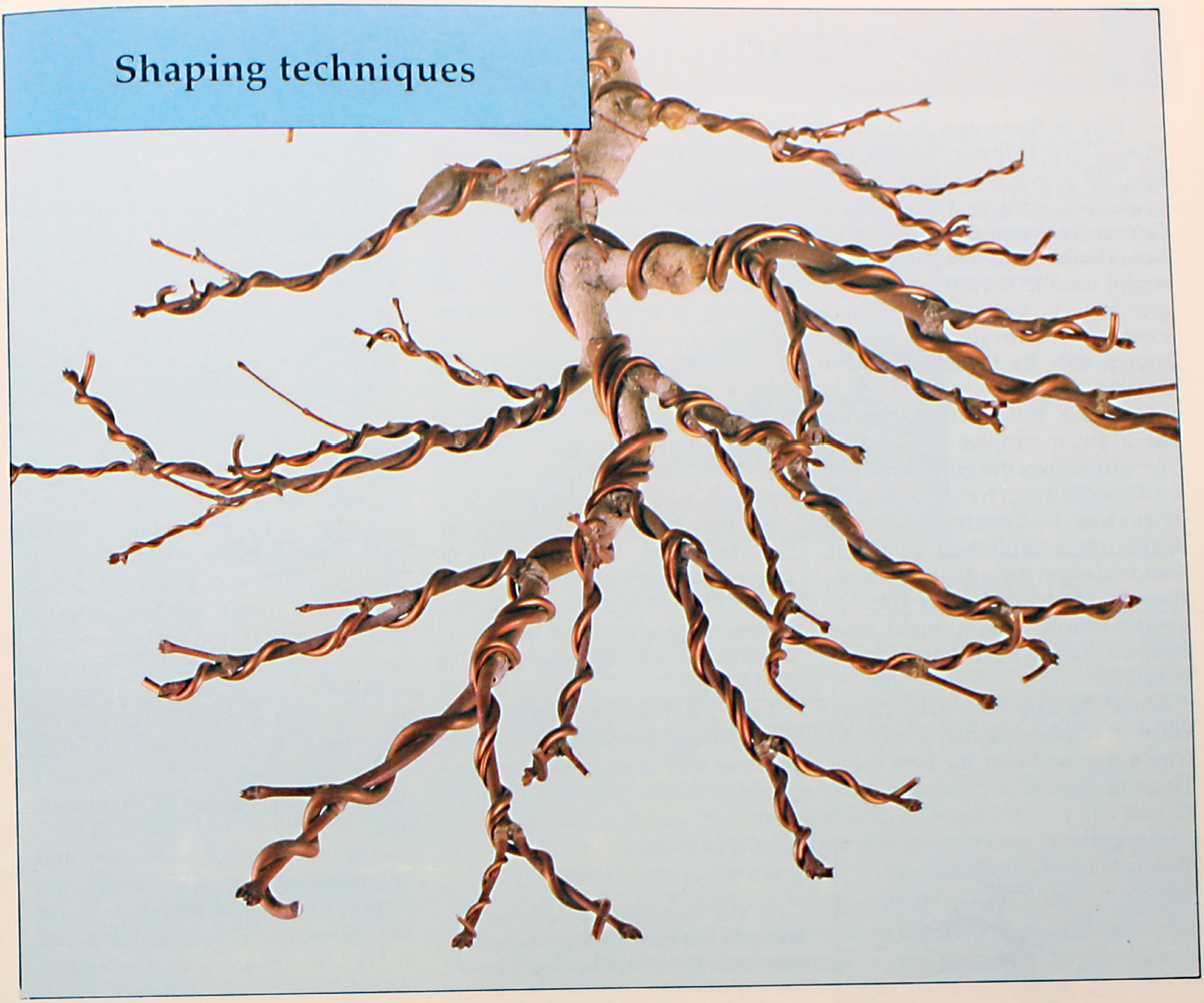
Trident maple, Acer buergeranum.
Height: 56 cm.



Cydonia sinensis. Height: 74 cm. This species is appreciated for its brilliant fall foliage.



Akebia quinata. Height: 73 cm. A monoecious twining shrub, native to China, Japan and Korea.



WIRING

Author: YONETAMI TOSHIHIRO
Adaptation: John Palmer

This article is an almost exhaustive explanation of one of the most important shaping methods in Bonsai.

The abundance of photographs, following the process step by step, and the explanations, make this a simple and easy method for those enthusiasts who have only recently taken up the art of Bonsai.

For those who are more advanced, the article should be a useful review and may provide some new insight. The sequence of the explanation may seem a little unusual, but it has been proven sound in the wide experience of the author, a Japanese Bonsai master.

1 Introduction to wiring

Many of those new to the art of Bonsai are surprised when they first see a tree with its trunk and branches wrapped with wire. Generally their reaction varies from thinking that the wire is a restraint used to keep the trees from growing, to believing that it is some sort of mysterious method known only by those initiated in the art.

However, the practice of wiring has a much simpler explanation. The wire allows the grower to bend and redirect the trunk and branches to create a design. Applying established aesthetic standards and his artistic imagination, the grower can give the tree greater beauty then it might have attained had it been left to grow naturally.

More advanced enthusiasts know that there are many ways to wire a tree and that the best solution for any given case can only be learned through experience; an experience gained at the cost of more than one broken branch.

For the newcomer to bonsai, it is important to follow the advice given in this article, until you have enough expertise to adapt the advice to your own style of work. For the more experienced grower, new insights may be gained.

Bonsai's history itself shows us that there has not been one sole method of shaping, but that through time distinct techniques have been utilized and developed.

At first, trees in pots did not go through a shaping process strictly speaking, if we overlook the occasional pruning and trimming. They were simply trees kept in containers.

Later, it became evident that something more than simple pruning was necessary to achieve the different forms sought by the grower. And so, towards the end of the 18th century, some Chinese cultivators had the idea of using lead strips, wrapping the branches in a tubular fashion, so that, when the tube was bent, the branch would stay in the desired position. But this method was only useful in areas of sparse branching and provided little design flexibility.

Hanging weights, another method, presented the problem that one could only vary the position of a branch vertically and only at one specific point. It was difficult to know what the proper weight was to bend a branch and what maximum weight it could support without breaking. Another difficulty was that the weight that was adequate in winter may not be so in spring, with the return of sap and greater vigor throughout the tree.

This method of shaping with weights was popular in Japan during the Meiji period (1868-1912).

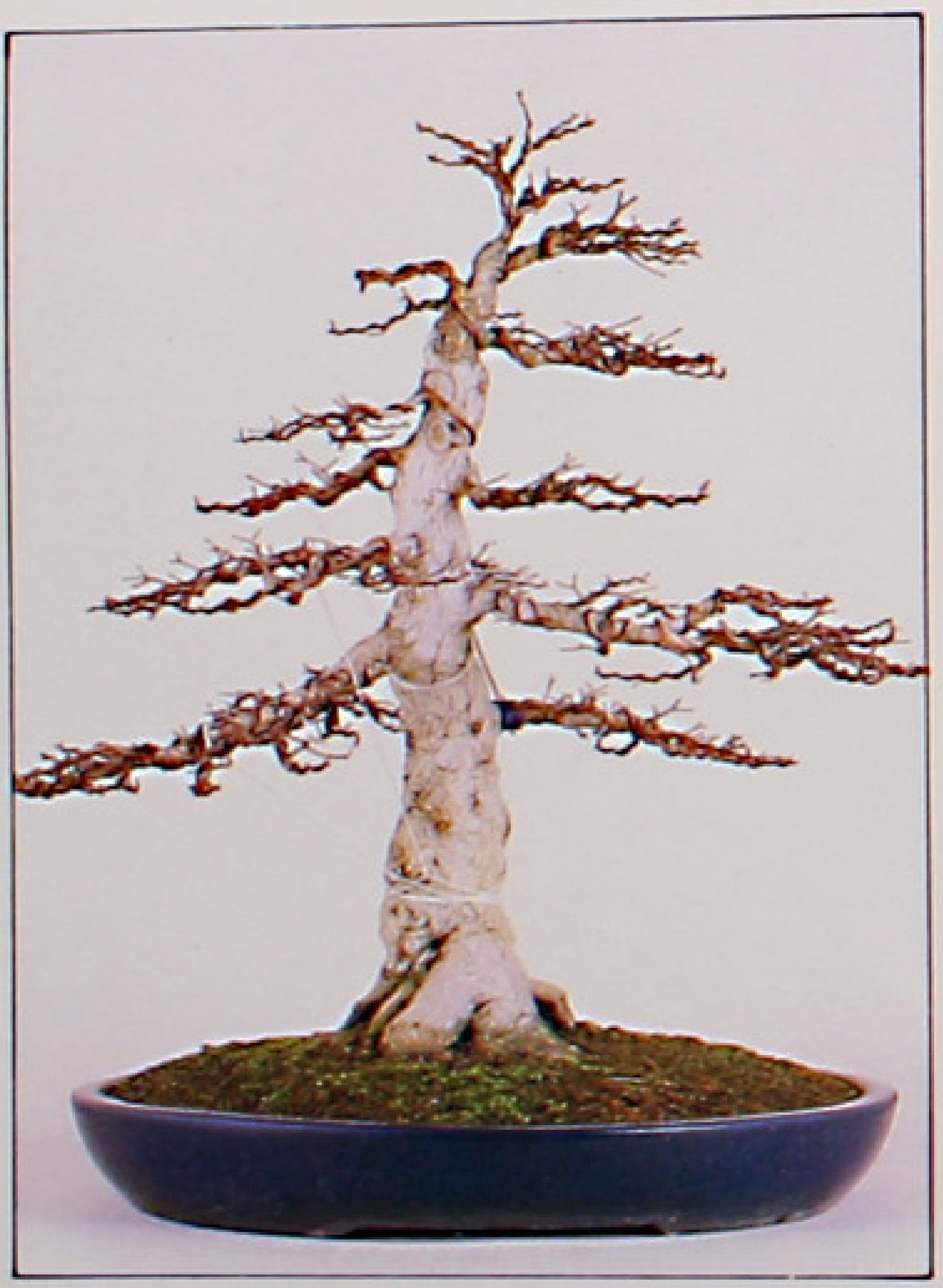
Another method used was that of stakes or guides, to which the young tree would be tied while it was growing. This method is still in use for preliminary shaping of young field-grown material.

The bamboo-stake method, combined with tieing and tensioning branches, despite all the complexity this entails, is rarely used for shaping bonsai, although today in Japan this technique is widely used to shape garden trees.

It was early in this century when wiring came into use in Japan. The first book that treats this subject is dated 1910 and is titled SANYU-EN BONSAI-DAN (History of Bonsai in the Sanyu nursery).

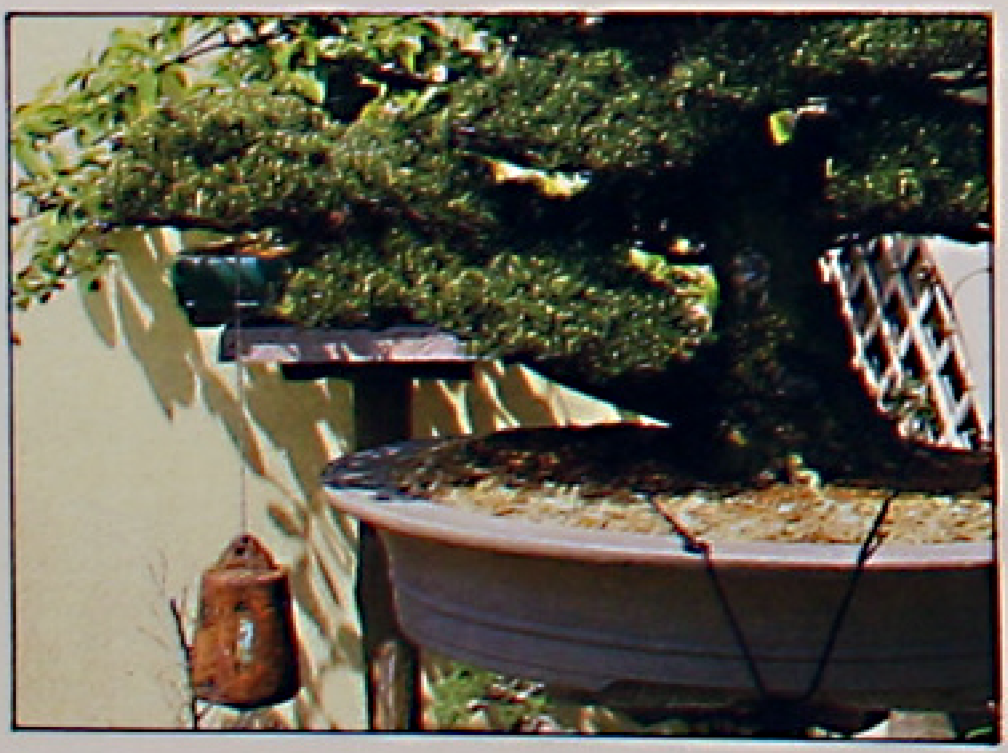
From that date, the use of wire rapidly took the place of all previous methods and became the fundamental technique —with the help of pruning and pinching, of course—in shaping Bonsai.

At the beginning, iron wire was used; later, copper; and more recently anodized aluminum. Copper and aluminum wire are



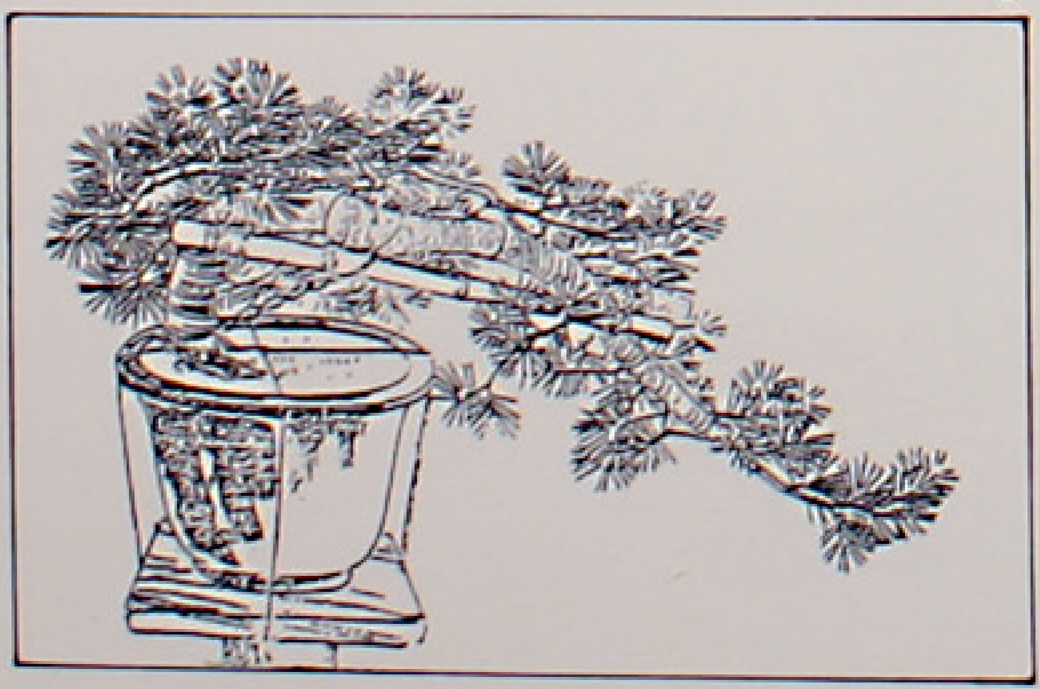
1

1 The combination of wire on the branches and guy wires positions the branches so that later, when the wires are removed, the branches remain in a better position.



2

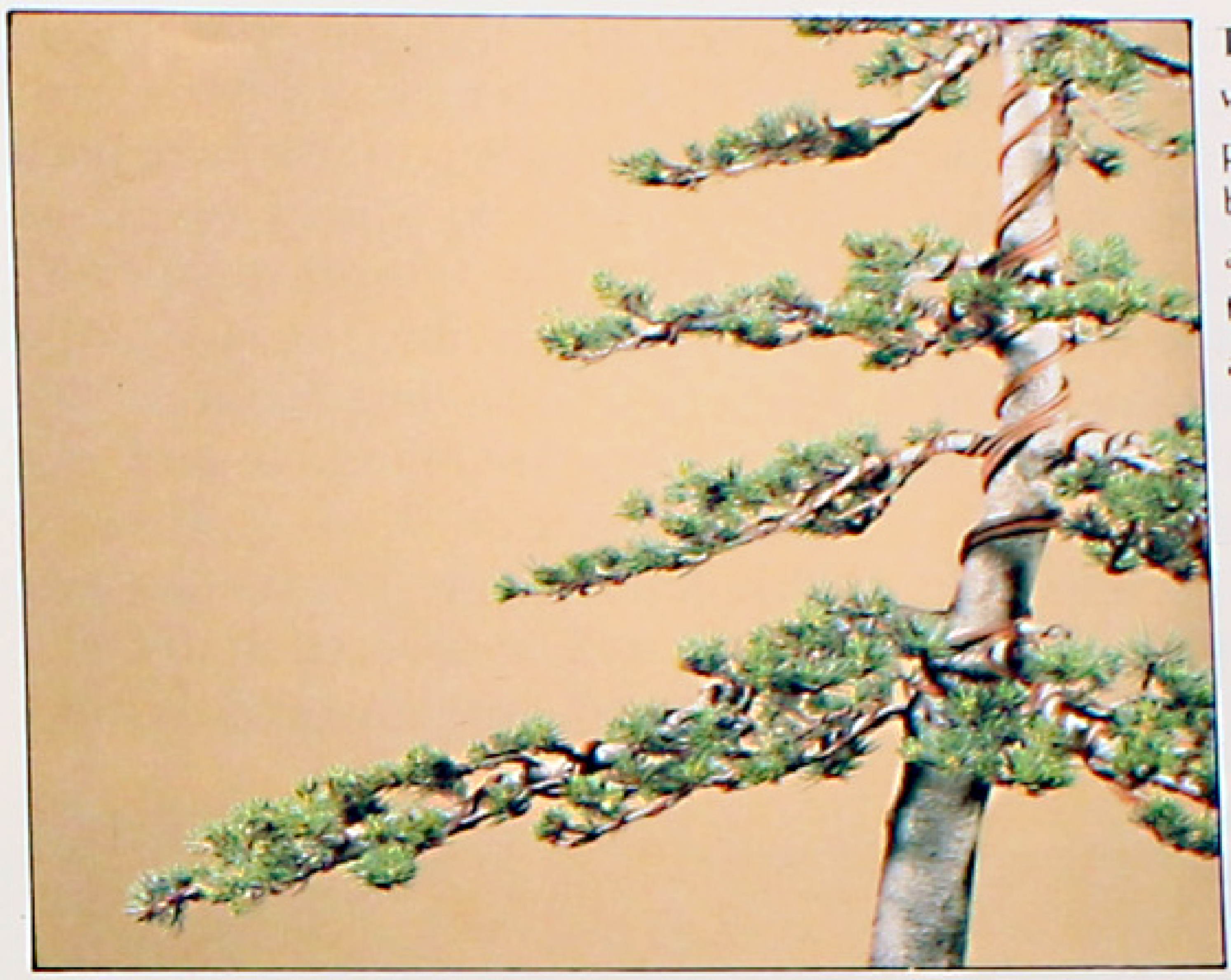
2 Another shaping method is the placement of weights at the place where a branch needs to be lowered.



3

3 One of the first aids to Bonsai artists were bamboo canes and cords.

Introduction to wiring



The only function of wiring is to change the position and form of branches and trunk to adapt the tree to the style that is considered most appropriate.

	COMPARISON OF MATERIALS
COPPER	**AVAILABILITY:** Copper wire is readily available in most hardware stores and from electrical supply houses. Purchase wire in the soft or annealed condition, unless you wish to anneal it yourself. (Heat to a dull red condition and cool slowly.) Scrap wire may also be available. **ADVANTAGES:** When properly annealed, it is easy to apply. Because it has the characteristic of work-hardening, that is, becoming stiffer as it is bent, copper has superior holding power. With exposure to the elements, copper oxidizes to become visually inobtrusive. Traditional wiring material. **DISADVANTAGES:** The work-hardening property of copper makes it more difficult to remove, particularly in larger sizes. (It may be best to cut off each coil to avoid damage to the bark or breaking the branch.) Heavier wire is difficult to reuse, in that it must be annealed, straightened and annealed again. Small wires, in particular, are easy to overlook when removing wire.
ALUMINUM	**AVAILABILITY:** Aluminum wire with the surface anodized to a copper color is available through bonsai nurseries and by mail order from bonsai suppliers. **ADVANTAGES:** It is more forgiving during application and therefore easier to use. It is easier to remove, can be restraightened readily and reused without heat treatment. Higher visibility as it bleaches means that fewer wires will be overlooked when it is time to remove the wire. Gaining in popularity. **DISADVANTAGES:** Compared with copper, it has much less holding power; for the same strength, use wire with diameter about twice that of copper. Color may bleach out with time. The larger size wire required and bleached appearance make it aesthetically unattractive.

both widely used today. (See chart, this page). In this article, aluminum wire was used, but the principles and techniques apply as well to copper wire.

In any case, the purpose of wiring is to change the position and shape of trunk and branches, to adjust the tree to a predetermined design that the artist desires. We can consider pruning to be the appropriate solution in order to maintain the tree in the desired proportions, while wiring is the method to use to correct defects in the tree, as well as to refine and enhance the design we wish to achieve.

As a first step in learning to wire, it is instructive — although this may seem backwards — to learn how to unwire. By doing this you can appreciate, more effectively than by wiring, some of the subtleties of wiring technique and perhaps later eliminate some of the errors that might be committed through inexperience and haste.

If you do not have material to unwire during an initial practice session, study the unwiring section carefully, before you proceed to wiring a branch. Practice not on your prized trees, but on small branches removed from deciduous trees in your garden. It is only through practice that you can learn to wire properly.

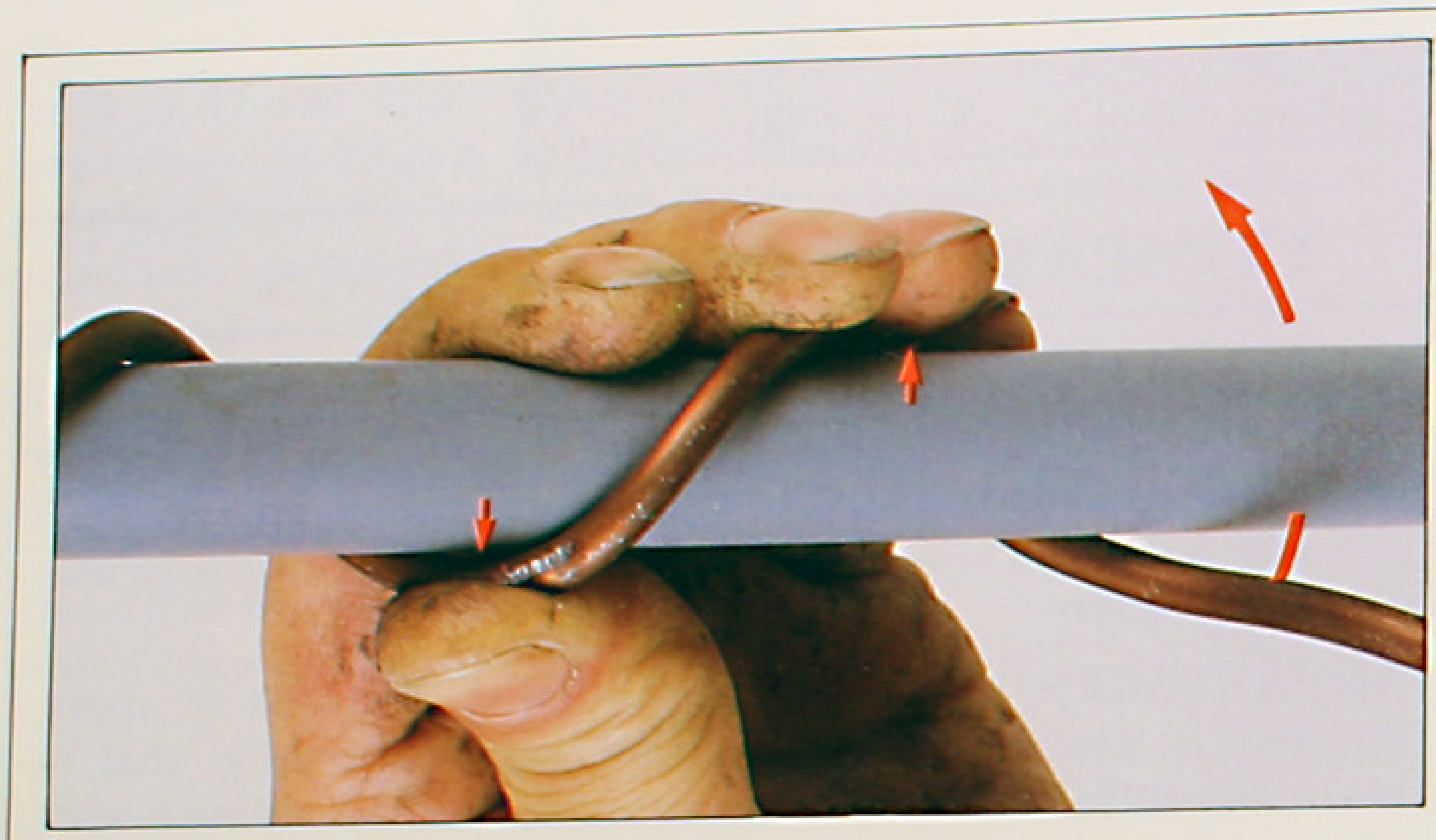
2 Unwiring

An effective way for learning how to wire is to begin by unwiring. Working with trees that are already properly wired has the advantage of offering an initial contact with the "feel" of the wire and an opportunity to appreciate, in an immediate and direct way, the effect the wire produces on the branches.

You should look at the angle used to coil the wire, the spacing of the coils, the apparent "tightness" with which the wire was applied, the gauge of the wire used in relation to the thickness of the branches, the continuity of the transition from one wire size to the next, how different branch configurations are handled and the overall effect that is finally achieved. Later, these considerations will be covered in detail.

When do you unwire? Whenever you observe that the wire is beginning to cut into the bark, you should remove the wire to avoid unsightly scars. If the branch drifts away from the desired position in the next few days, wire it again. If the wire has cut into the bark a little, try not to rewire on top of the previous wounds.

There is no exact calendar day on which you need to remove all wire; it all depends on the rapidity



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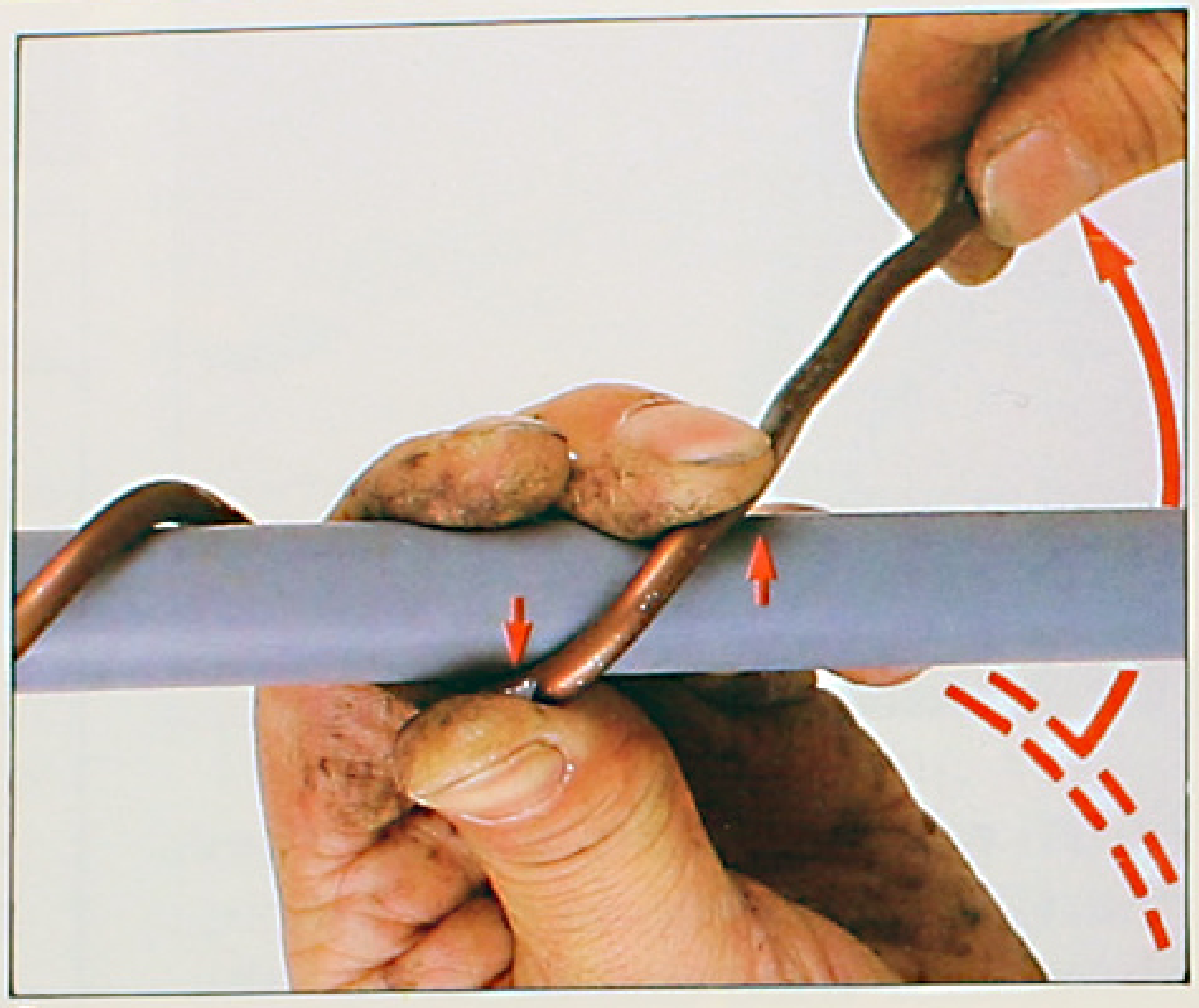

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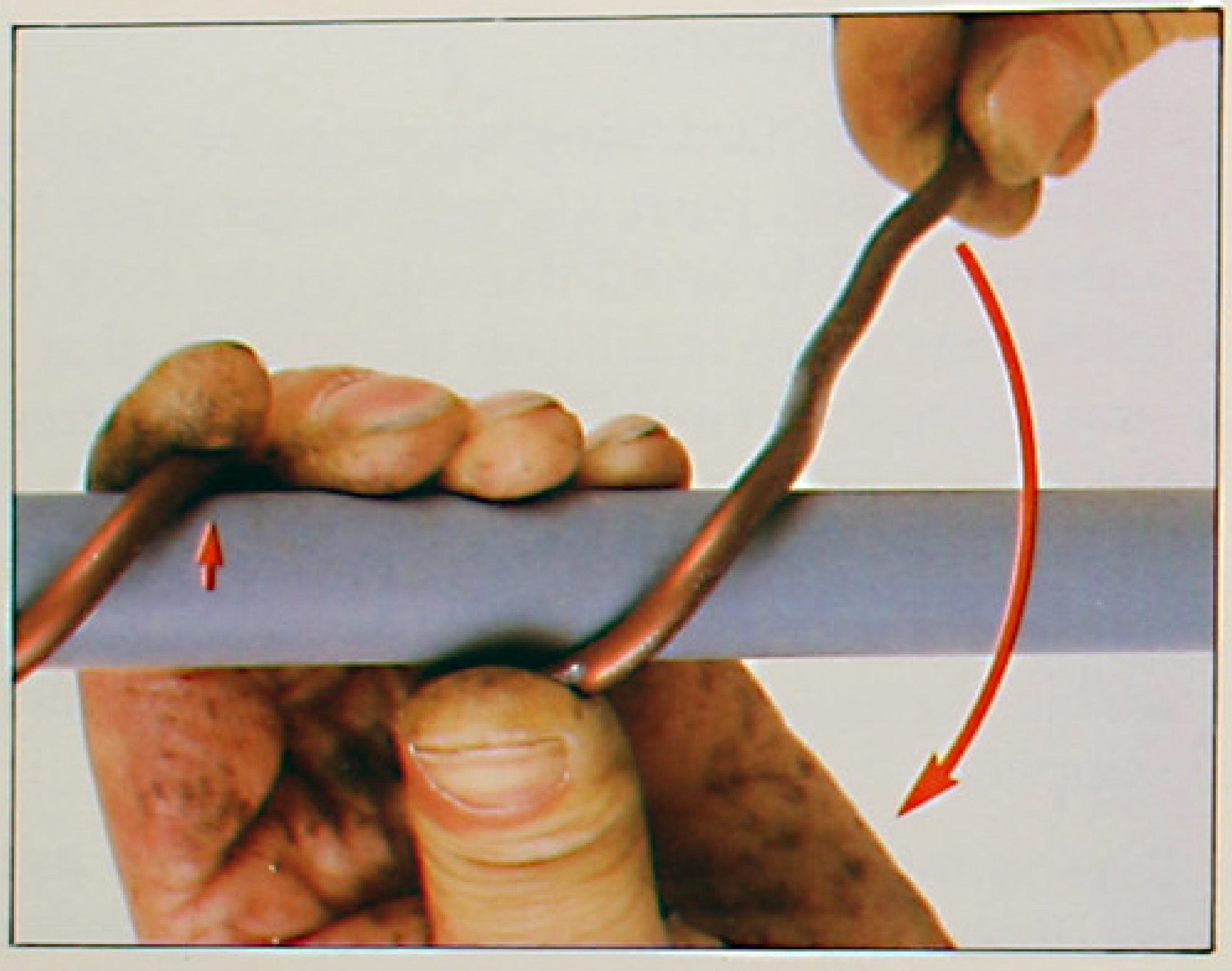
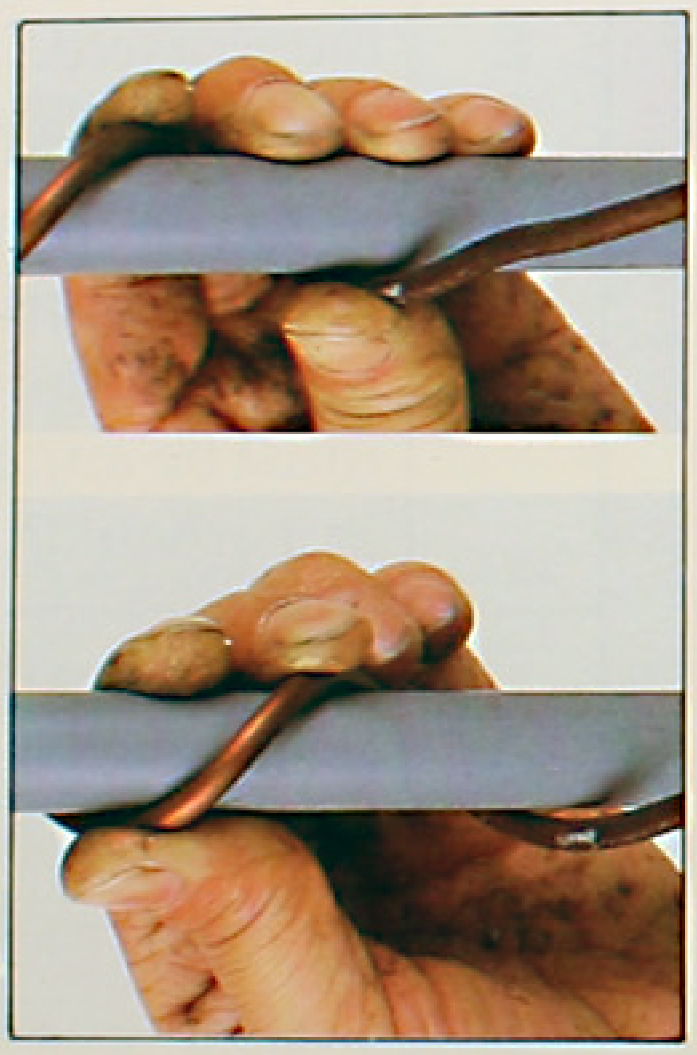
1 This shows how to hold the wire securely while unwiring. We shall make a 180 degree turn each time with the wire and shall then hold the next turn with our fingers. If we do not hold it tightly while uncoiling it, the wire will not follow the same path as when we wired it and we might damage the bark.

2 If the wire is securely held, we can go back or advance if we have made a mistake.

3





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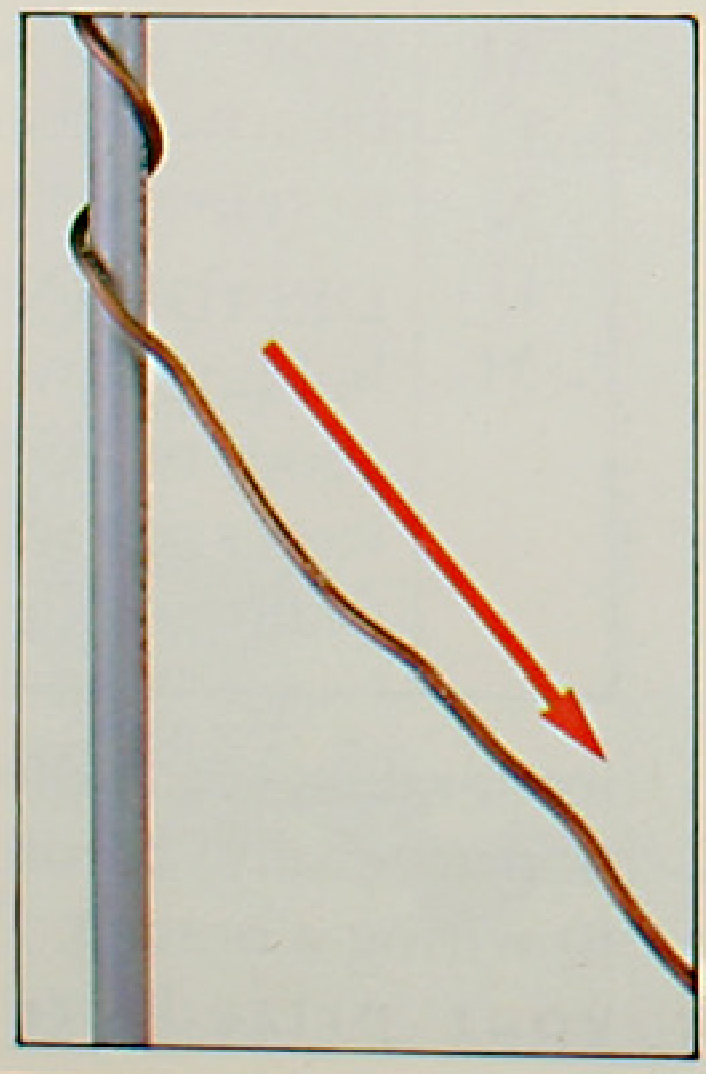
3 When we have uncoiled one half turn, we hold the following turn securely and then make another 180 degree turn.

4 This procedure is followed from the end of the branch to the trunk, that is, from the outside in.

5 We shall know if the process is well done if the wire stays straight.

6 Where working with one's fingers may be difficult, we can use long-handled pliers to secure each turn of the wire.



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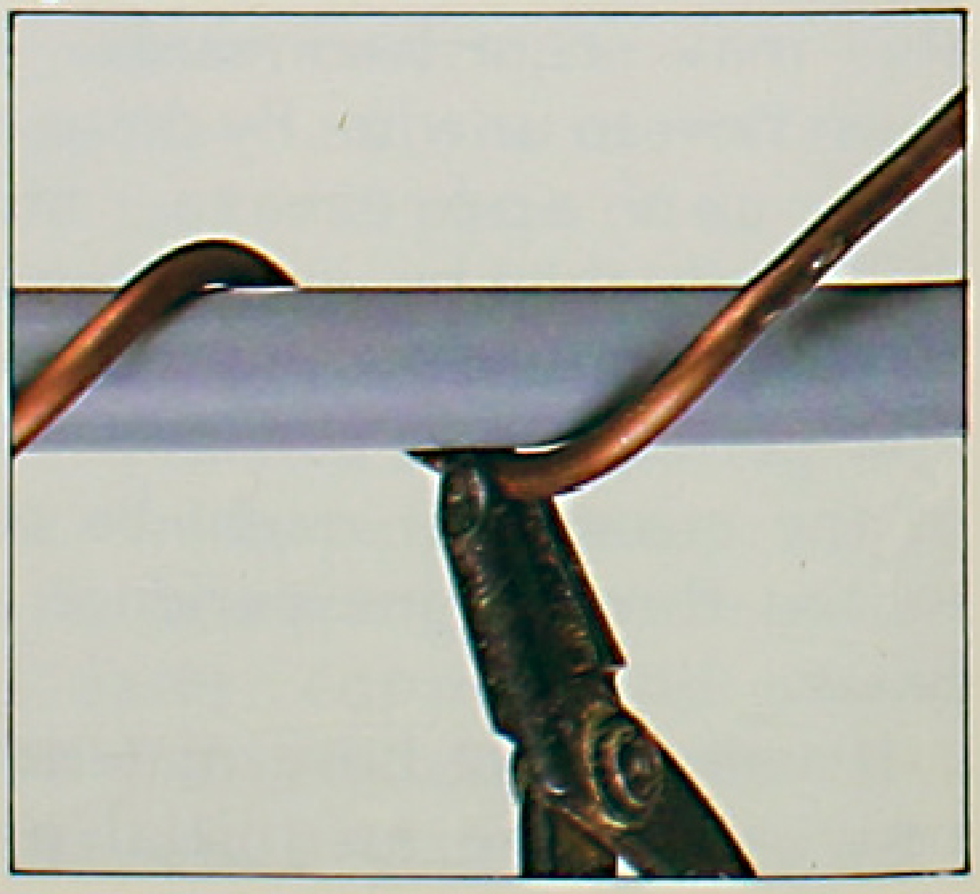


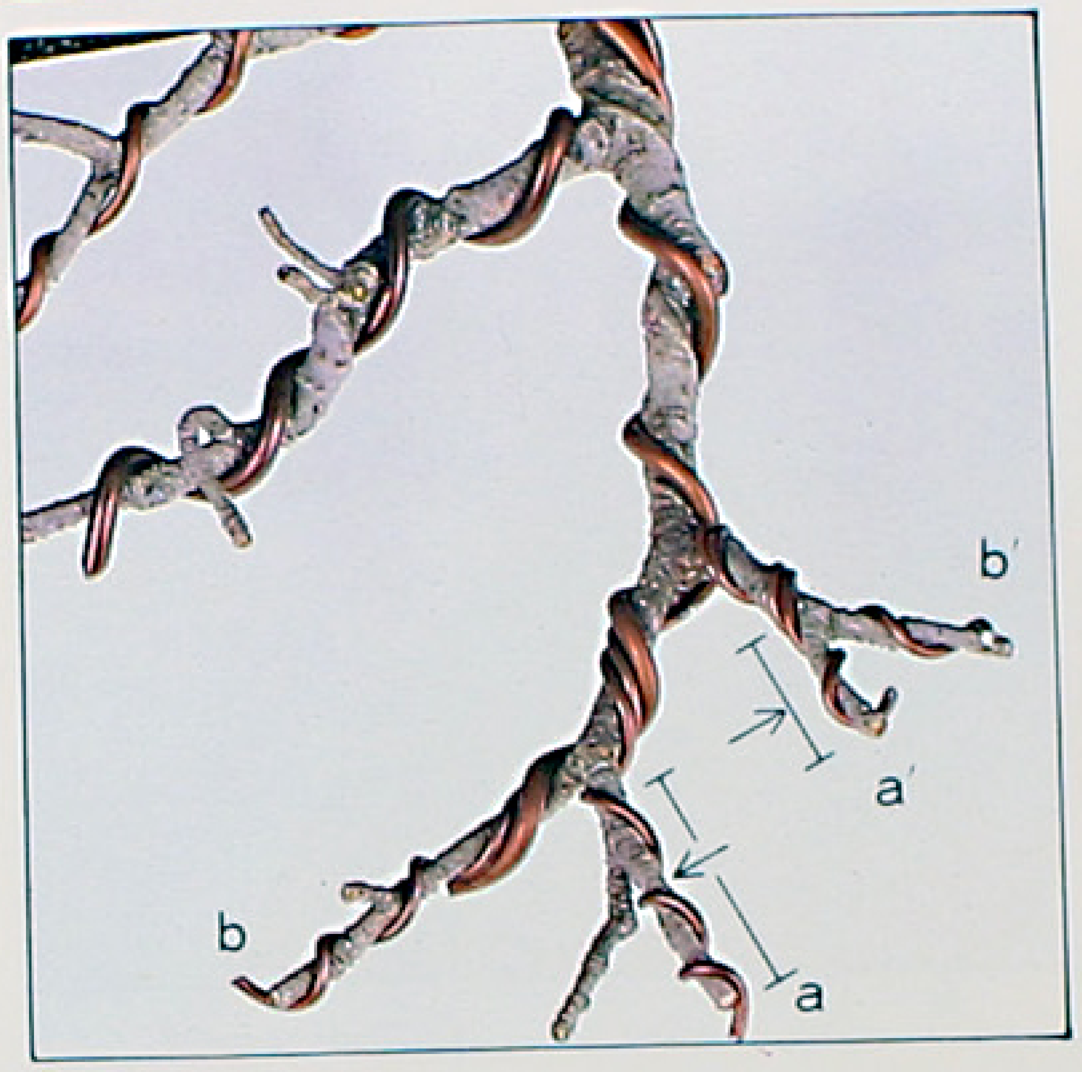
of growth of the wired tree, as well as on the part of the tree being considered.

For example, for a young tree of rapid growth, such as the willow or maple, the wire may begin to cut into the bark within a few weeks or perhaps even a few days during periods of rapid growth. Similarly, the upper part of the trees, where growth tends to be much more rapid, should be watched more carefully than the lower branches.

In general, trunks and branches expand rapidly in spring as new growth surges and in late summer to early autumn. Look carefully at the wiring every week or so during these periods.

To unwire a tree, we begin by removing the fine wire first and then move to the next larger size. Therefore, we first remove the wire from the secondary branches, then from the primary ones, and finally from the trunk.

The illustrations on this and the previous page show the basic techniques for removing wire. Using these techniques, the likelihood of breaking branches or damaging the bark is minimized. Remember that when removing heavier wire, particularly copper, it may be better to cut off each coil, rather than trying to unbend it.



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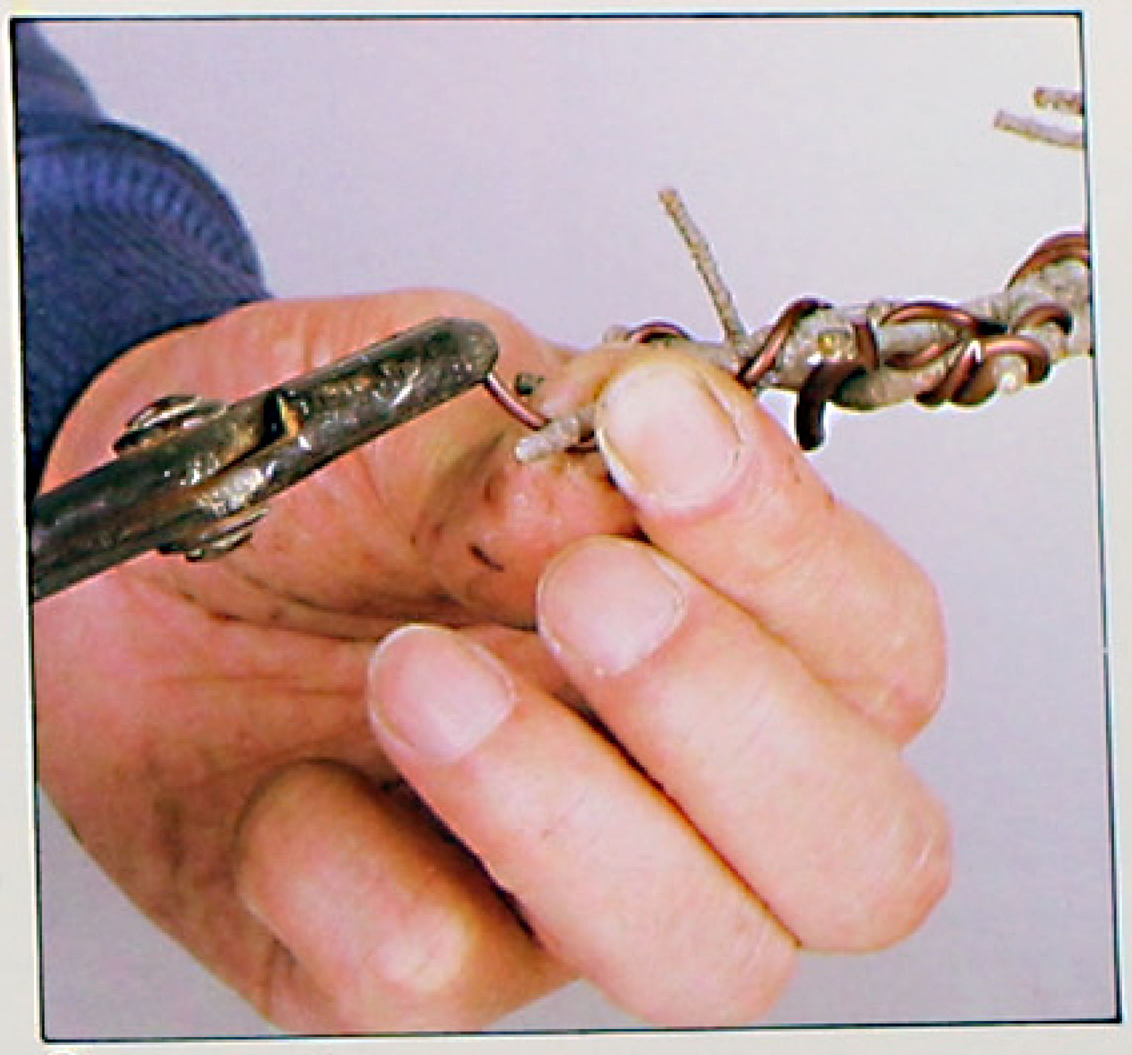

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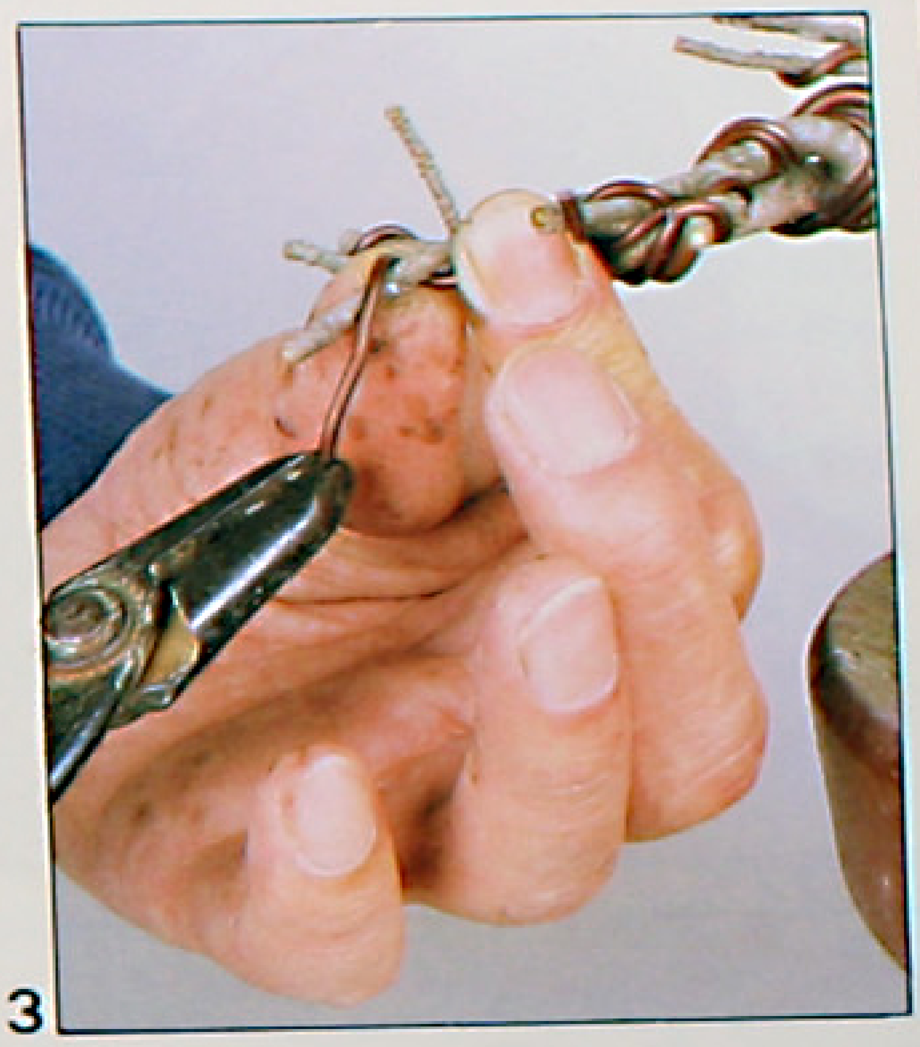


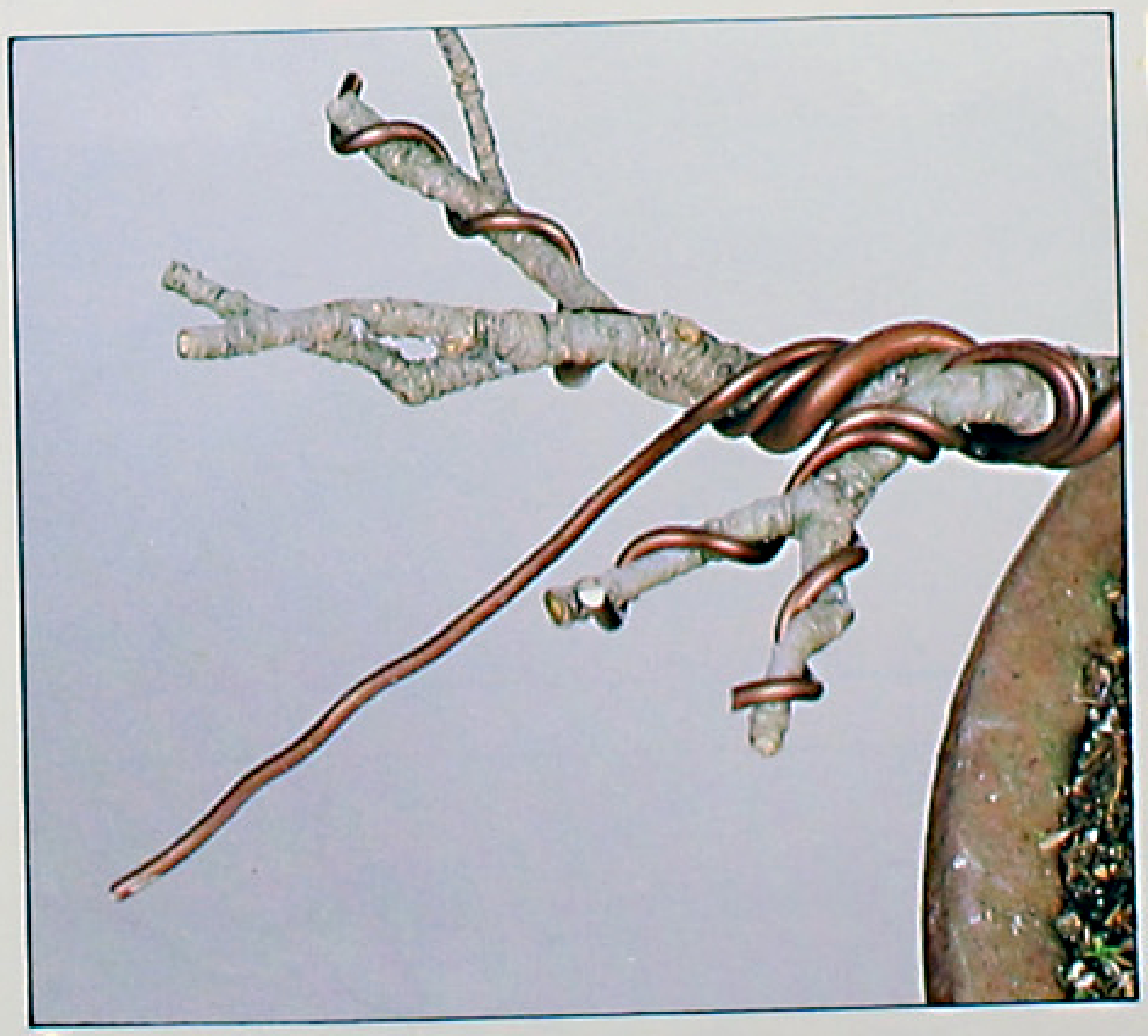
3

1 The wire is useful only at the point indicated by the arrow, where the branch changes position.

2 We shall begin by removing the wire at *a*, raising its end with pliers.

3 Securing the wire with our fingers, we follow the method described on the previous page.

4 When we reach the main branch, we begin to unwire at the other end.



4

5

5 The two ends of the wire are straight, which shows that the operation has been done correctly.

6 After unwiring the ends, we unwire the central part.

7 Then, we proceed in the same way with the thicker wire.

7

6

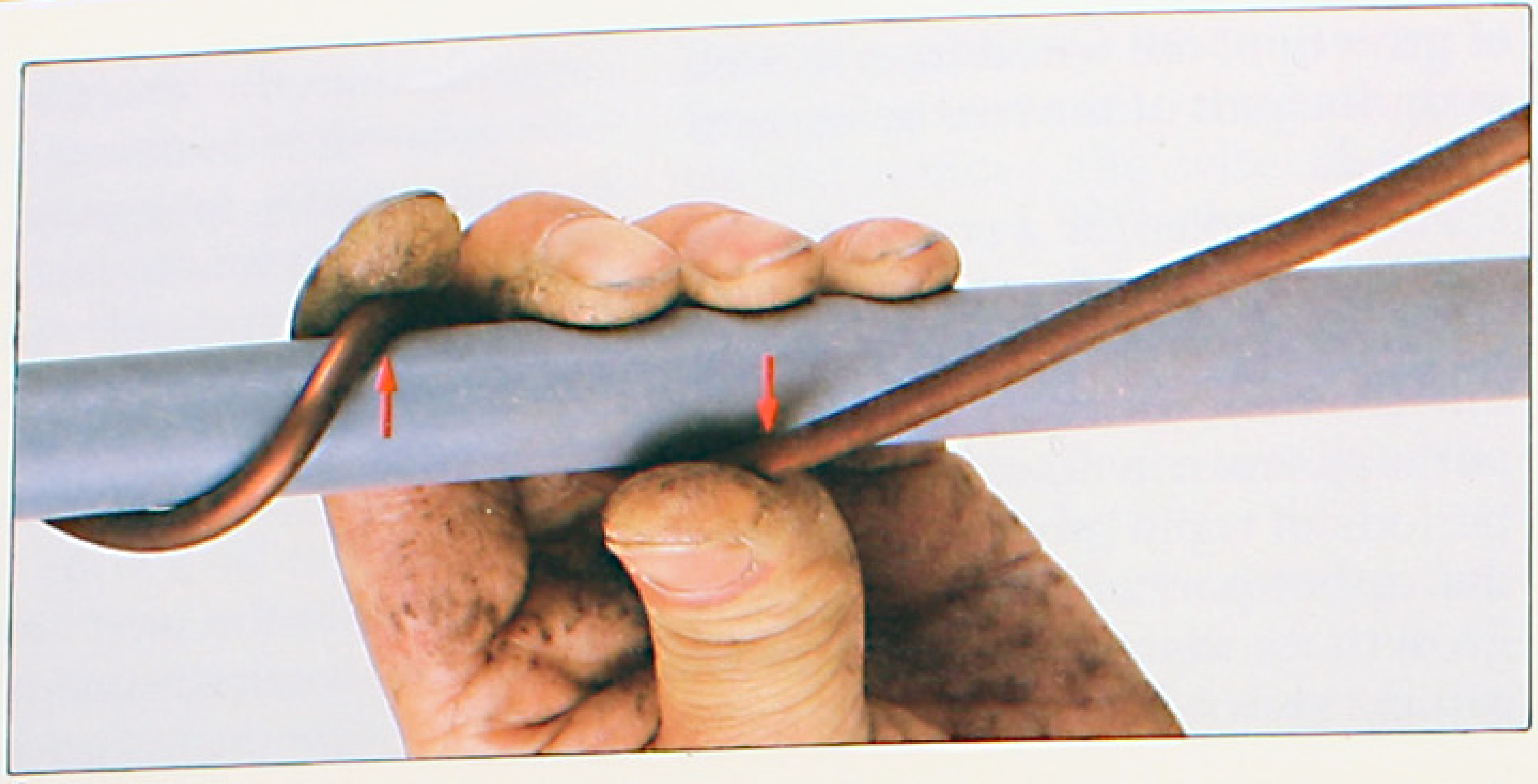
3 Wiring

1 To begin wiring, we use our thumb to secure the place where a new spiral is going to begin.

2 The distance between adjacent spirals should be the same and the angle of inclination 45 degrees.

3 Once you have acquired sufficient practice, it will not be difficult for you to wire a branch correctly in very little time. Remember to bring the wire fully around the branch at each hold point.

4 The process of wiring is finished. Look at the distance between the coils and the angle of inclination of the wire.



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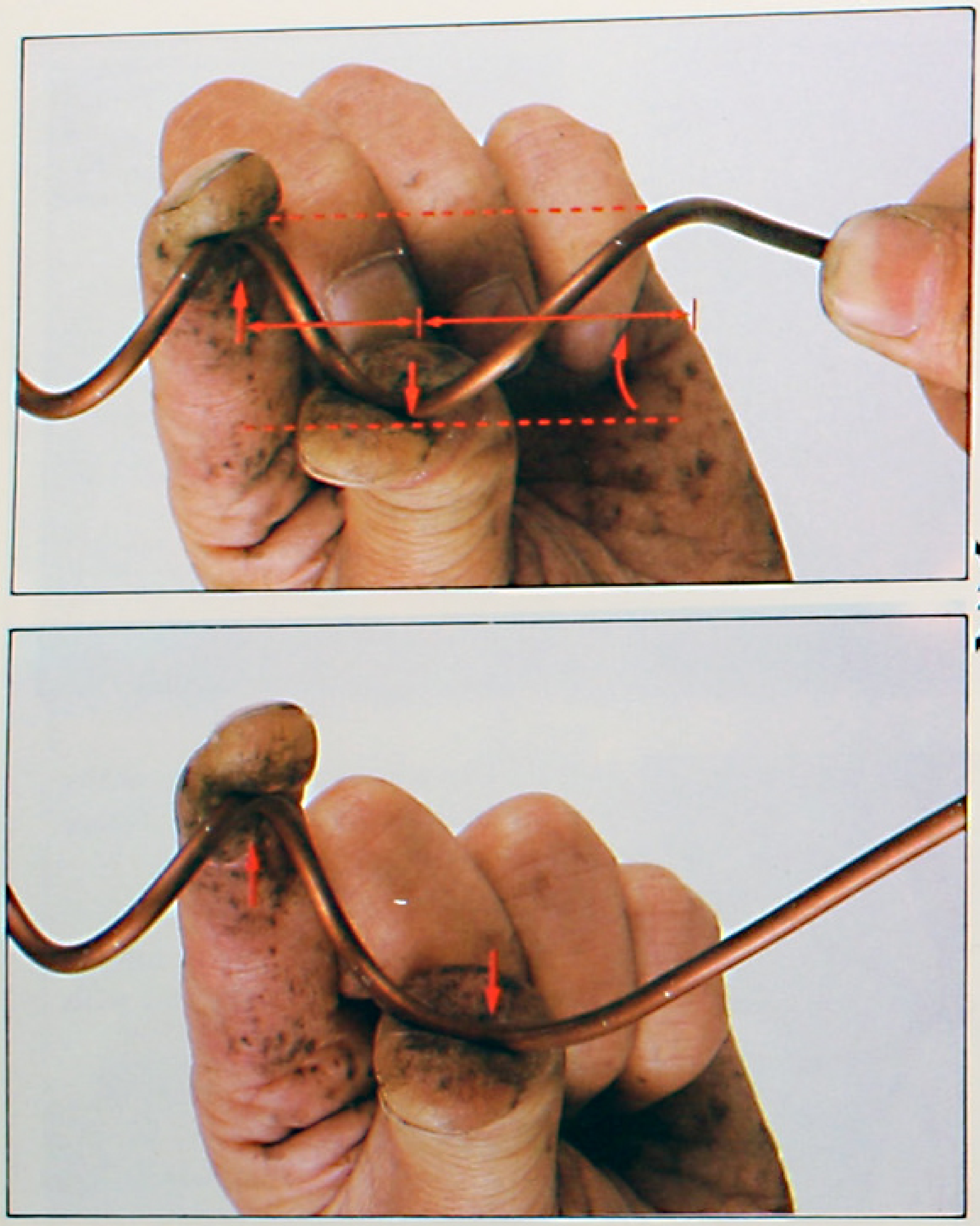

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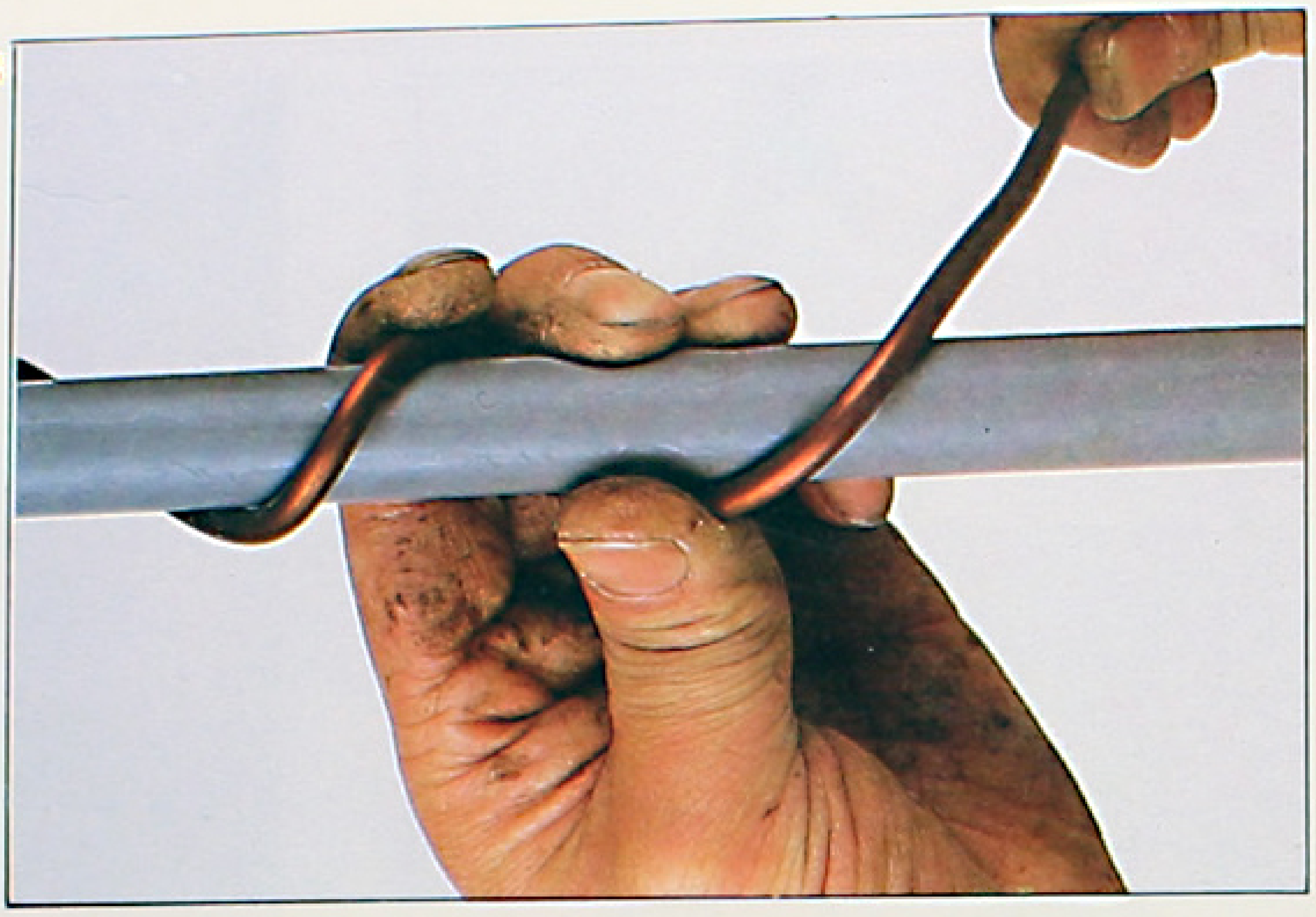

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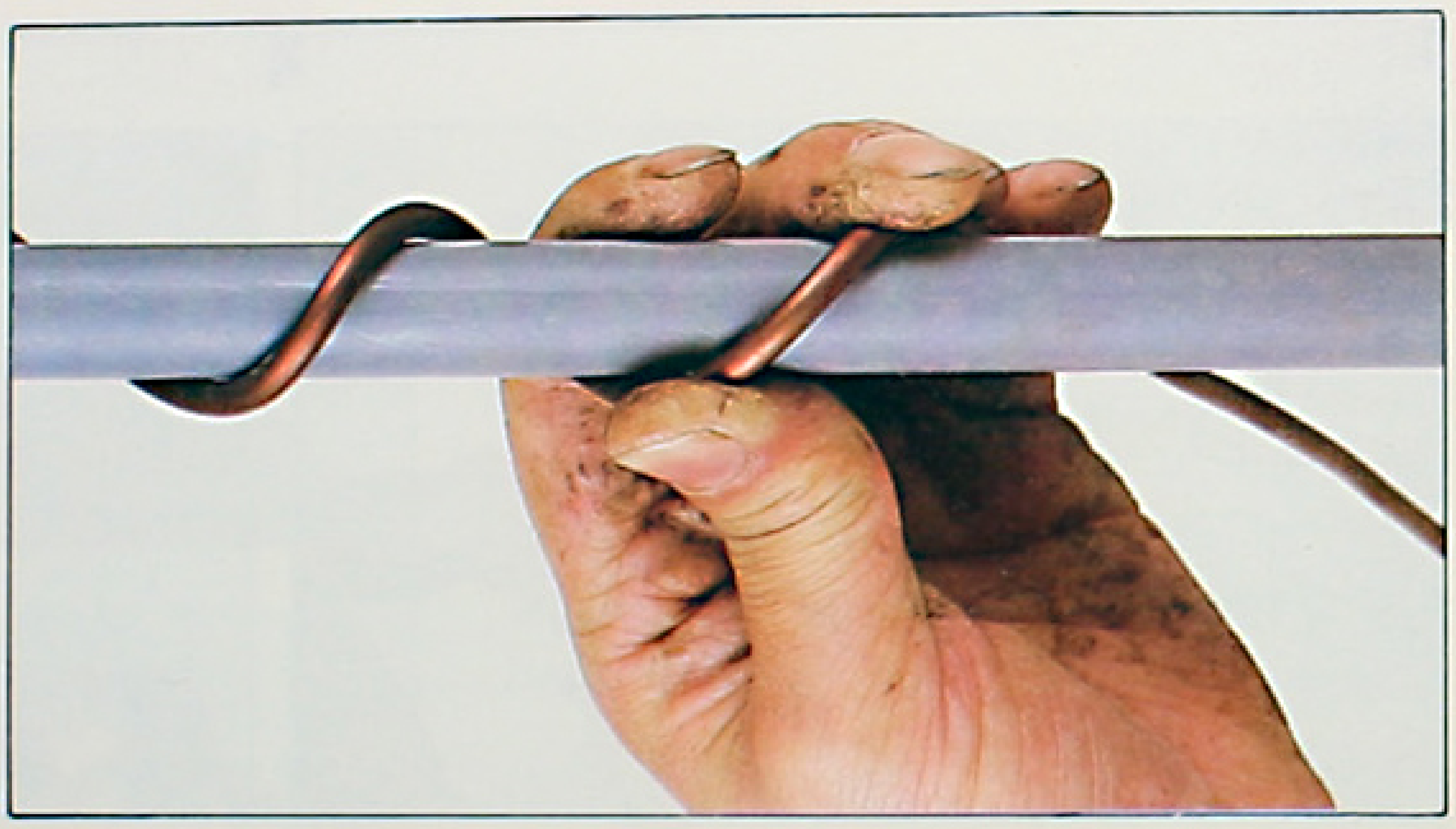

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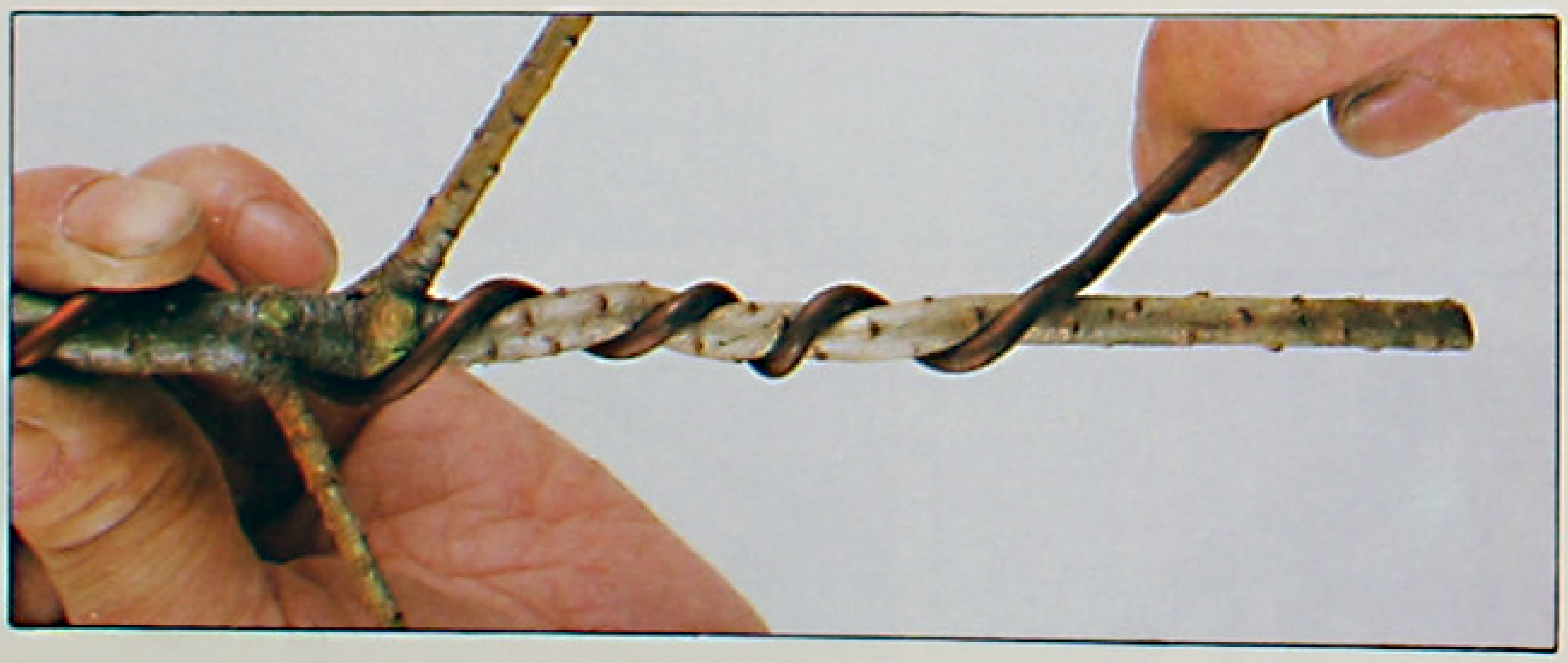
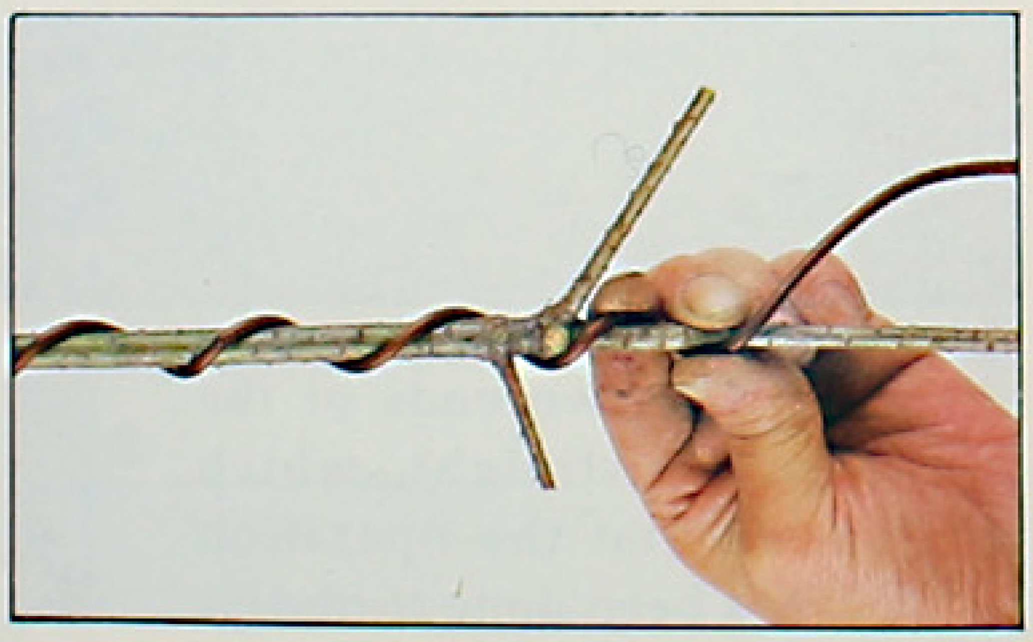
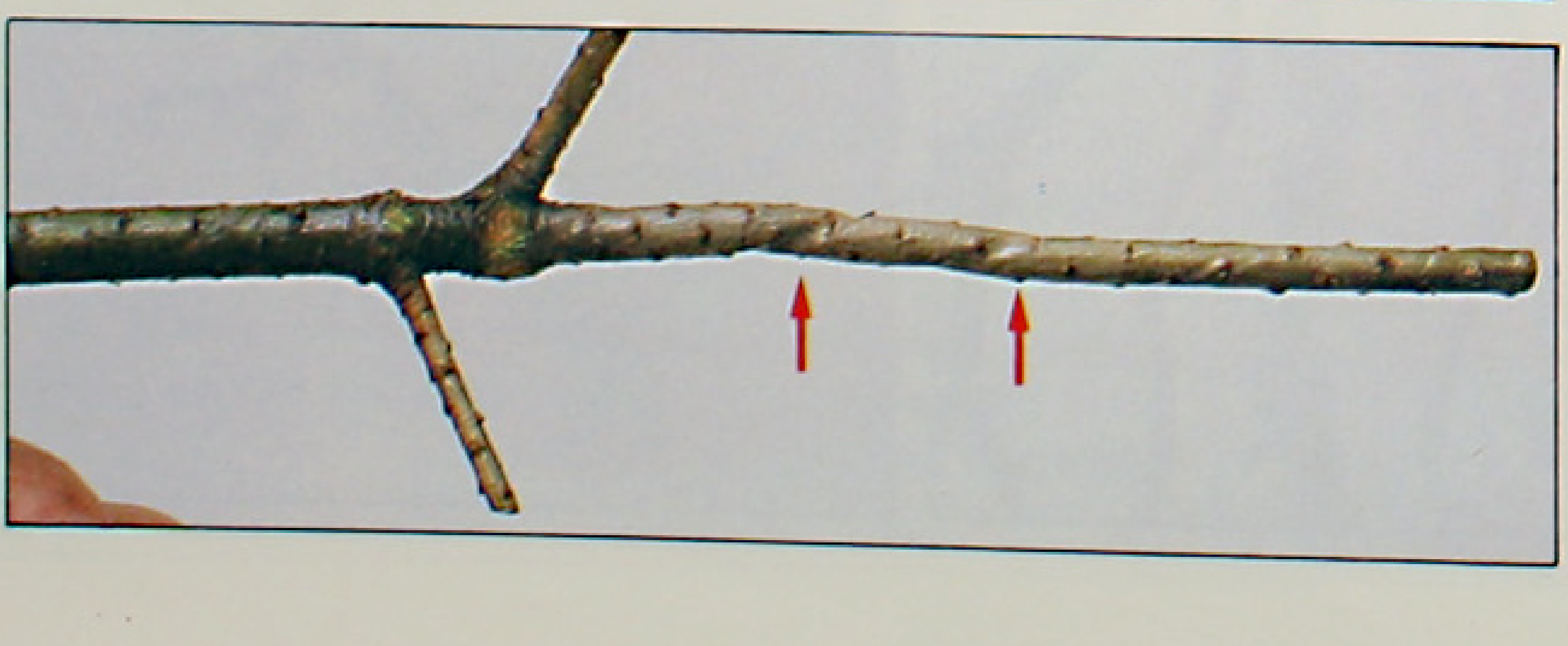






If we do not coil the wire following the process described above (holding the wire at each turn with the thumb), the results will be those that are found in the illustrations at the far left, with the consequent marring of the bark. Note, too, the difference with the correct manner of wiring in the photograph above on the right.

Wiring

The first point to consider, when beginning to wire, is the degree of pressure the wire should exert on the bark of the tree. If the wire is too tight, the tree will not have space to grow freely and you will have to unwire it in a few months or even weeks — before the branch has set. If it is too loose, it will not be able to secure the branch adequately.

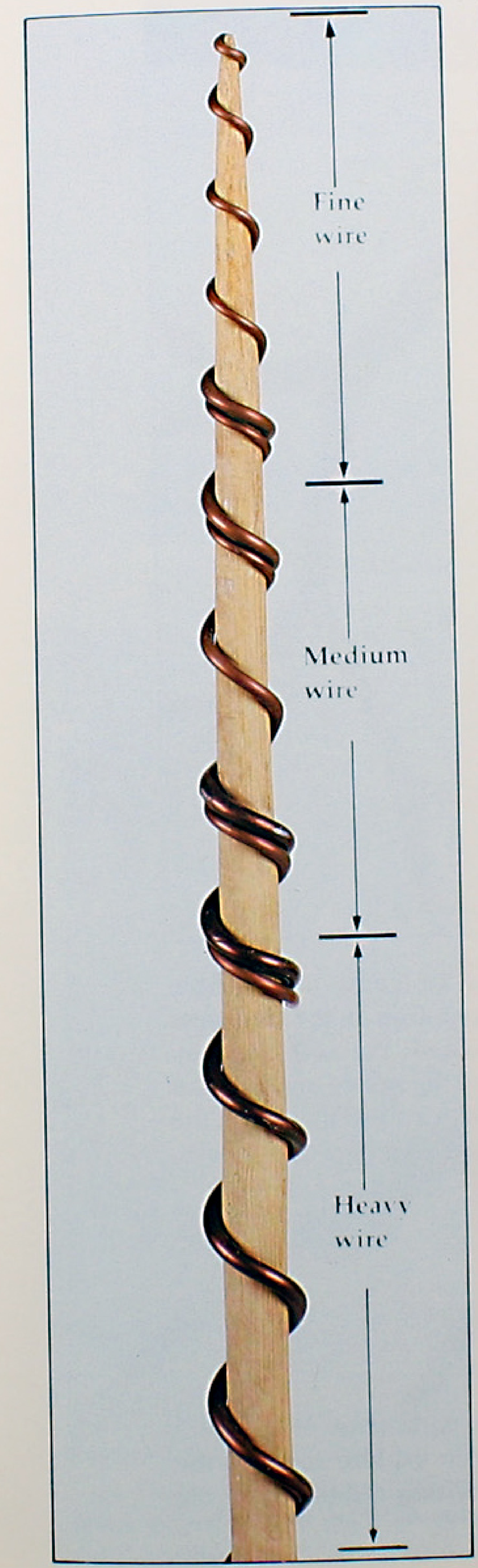
Classic Japanese canons establish that there should be just the thickness of a sheet of paper between the wire and the bark of the tree. In practice, what does this really mean? Probably the best description is "slightly tight."

The second point is that, while wiring, the wire should follow the shape of the trunk or branch. Do not try to bend the branch to the desired form while in the process of wiring; wait until the wire is applied and then bend the branch by bending the wire.

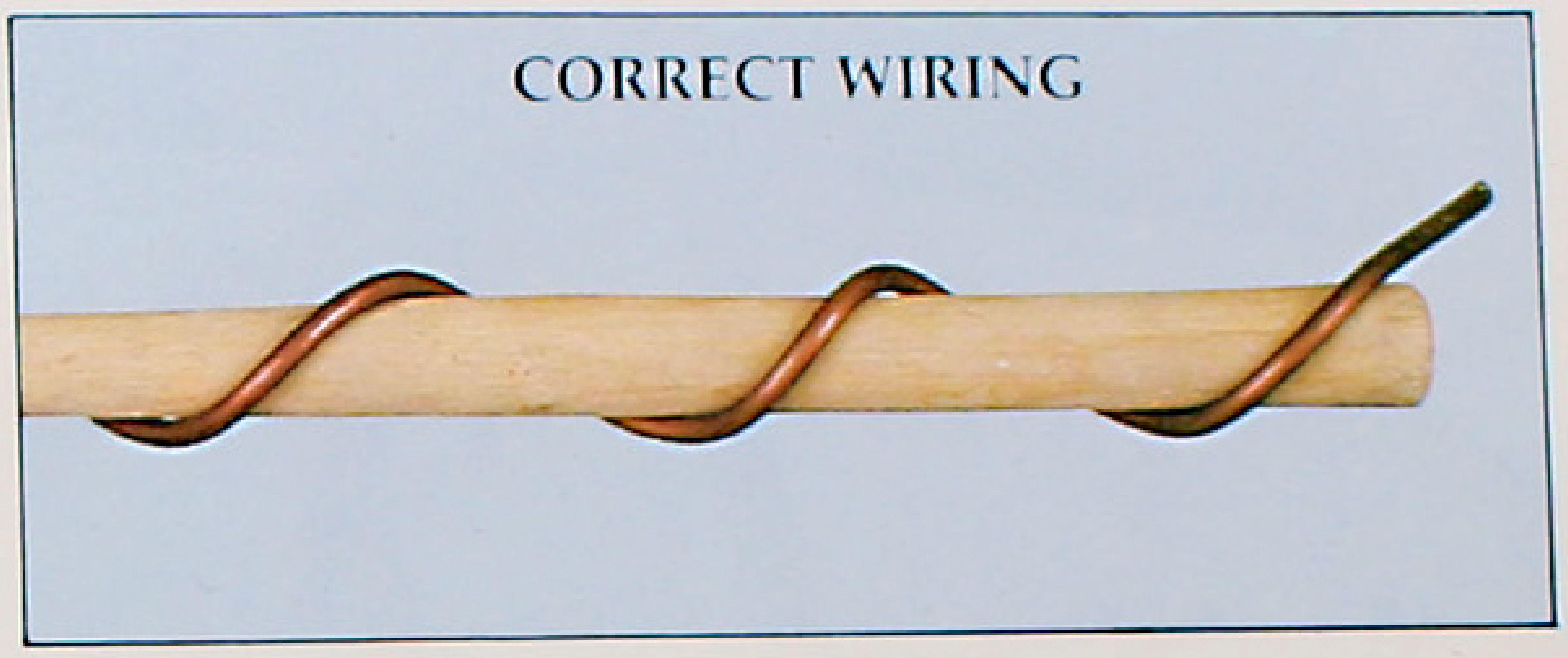
It must be emphasized that in order to wire properly, the position in which trunk and branches are to be placed should be pretty well defined before applying the wire. Then it is the experience gained by wiring and unwiring branches and experimenting with different gauges and types of wire that dictates wire placement.

At first, the main objective should be to master the angle of inclination of the wire with respect to the branch which should be 45°.

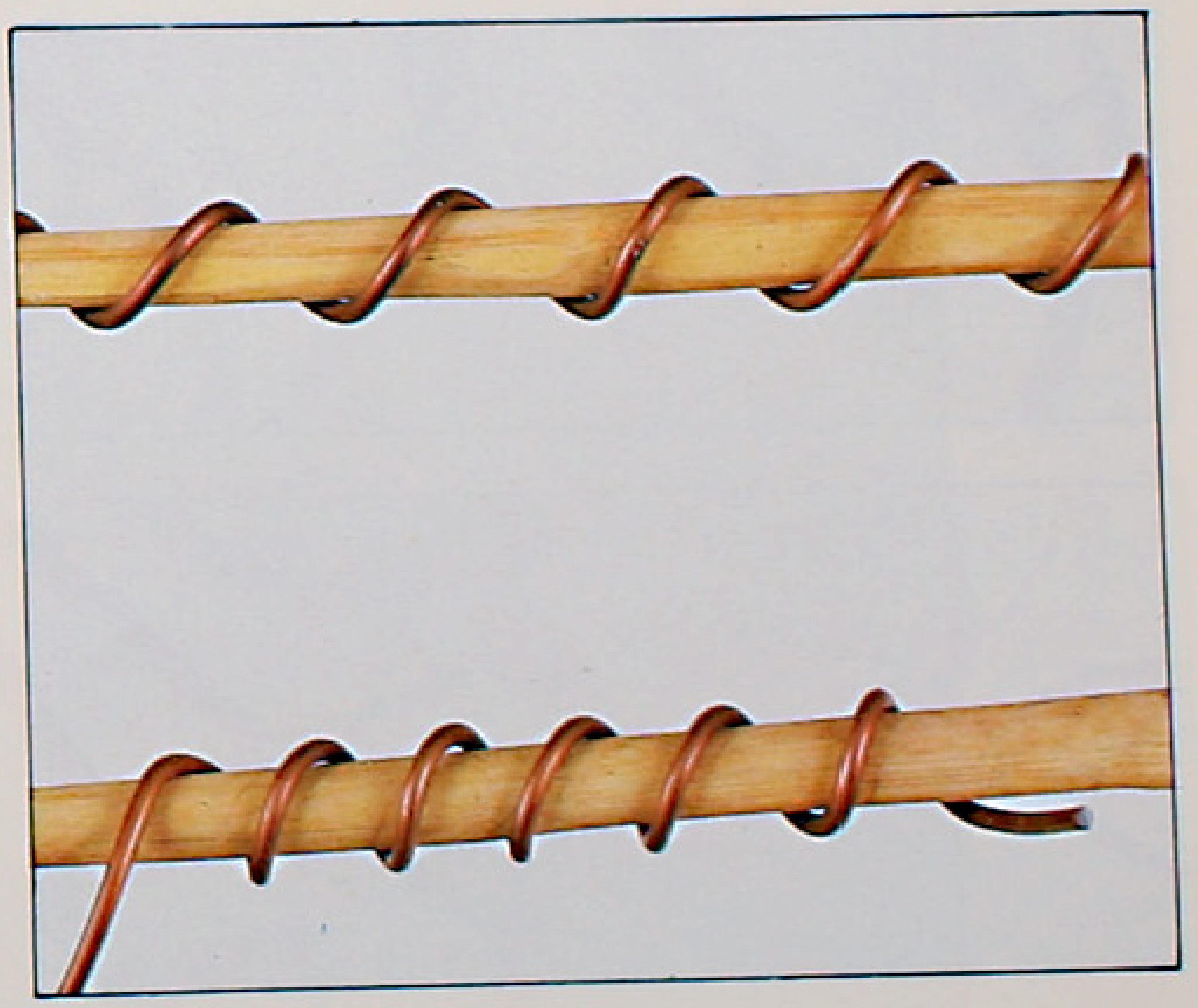
Next, practice transition from one wire size to the next.

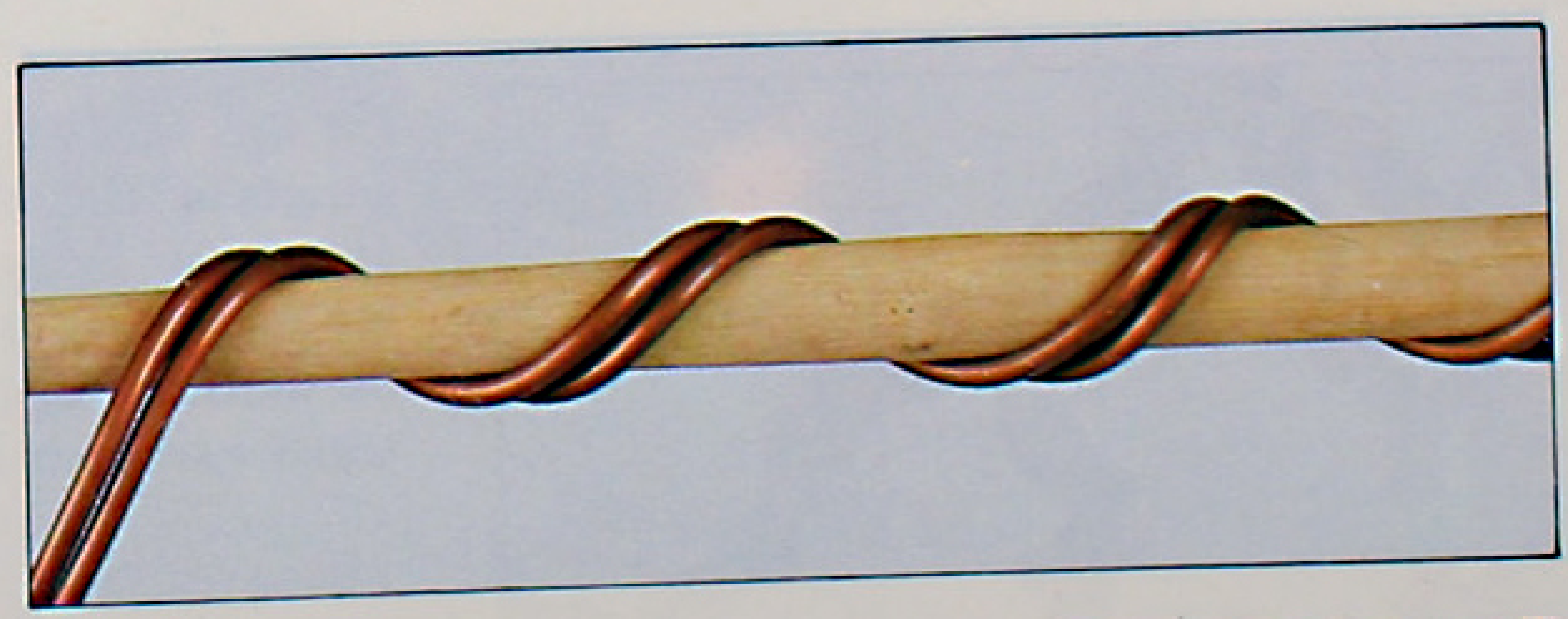


◀ Here is how to progress from one wire size to the next on the same branch, depending on the varying branch thickness. In this way, there is less danger of breaking fine branches by wiring weaker parts of a branch with wire of too heavy a gauge. Note that, for two turns, the wire of greater gauge is accompanied by the finer, so that the latter will have sufficient turns to be secure.

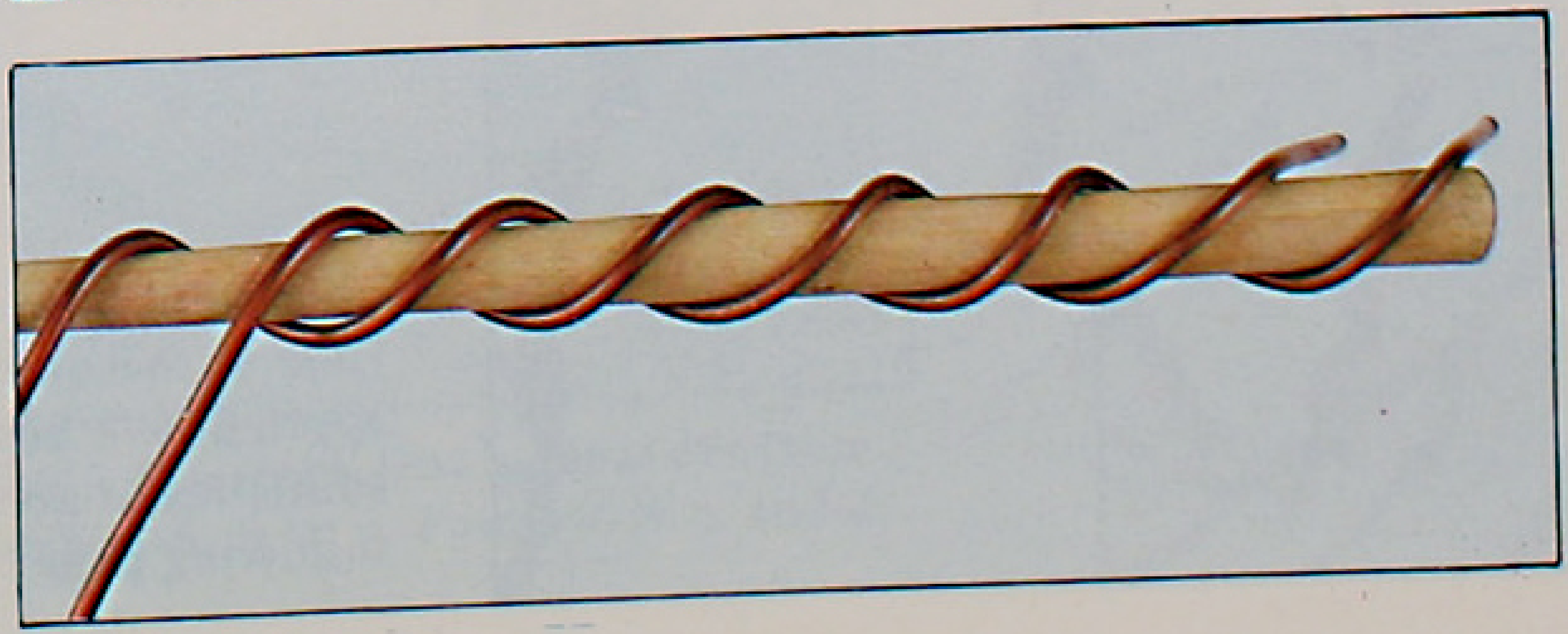


In these examples, the coils are too close, but in the lower one, in addition, the wire will probably mar the bark in very short order, perhaps as soon as the tree begins to bud.
▼





◀ If, once the wire is in place, we find that it is not sufficient to hold the branch at the desired position, we can add another wire very close to the first, following the same spiral.



◀ If we just want to give a branch a slight bend, this type of wiring is most appropriate.

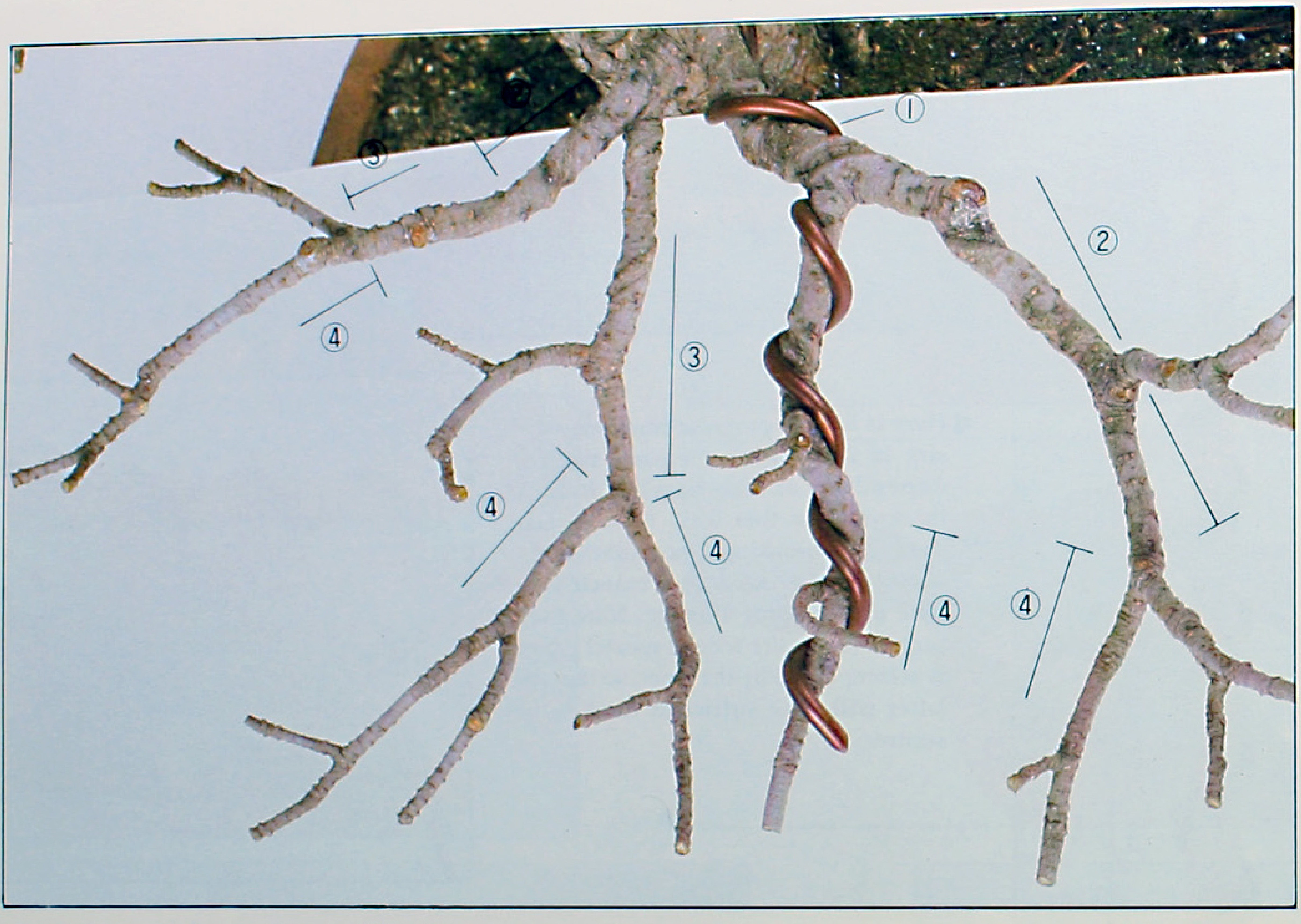
4 Wiring branches

The ramification of the tree must be seen in the greatest possible detail if wiring is to be properly applied. Wiring may be done any time, but in the case of a deciduous tree, it is easier in winter, when the tree has lost all its leaves .

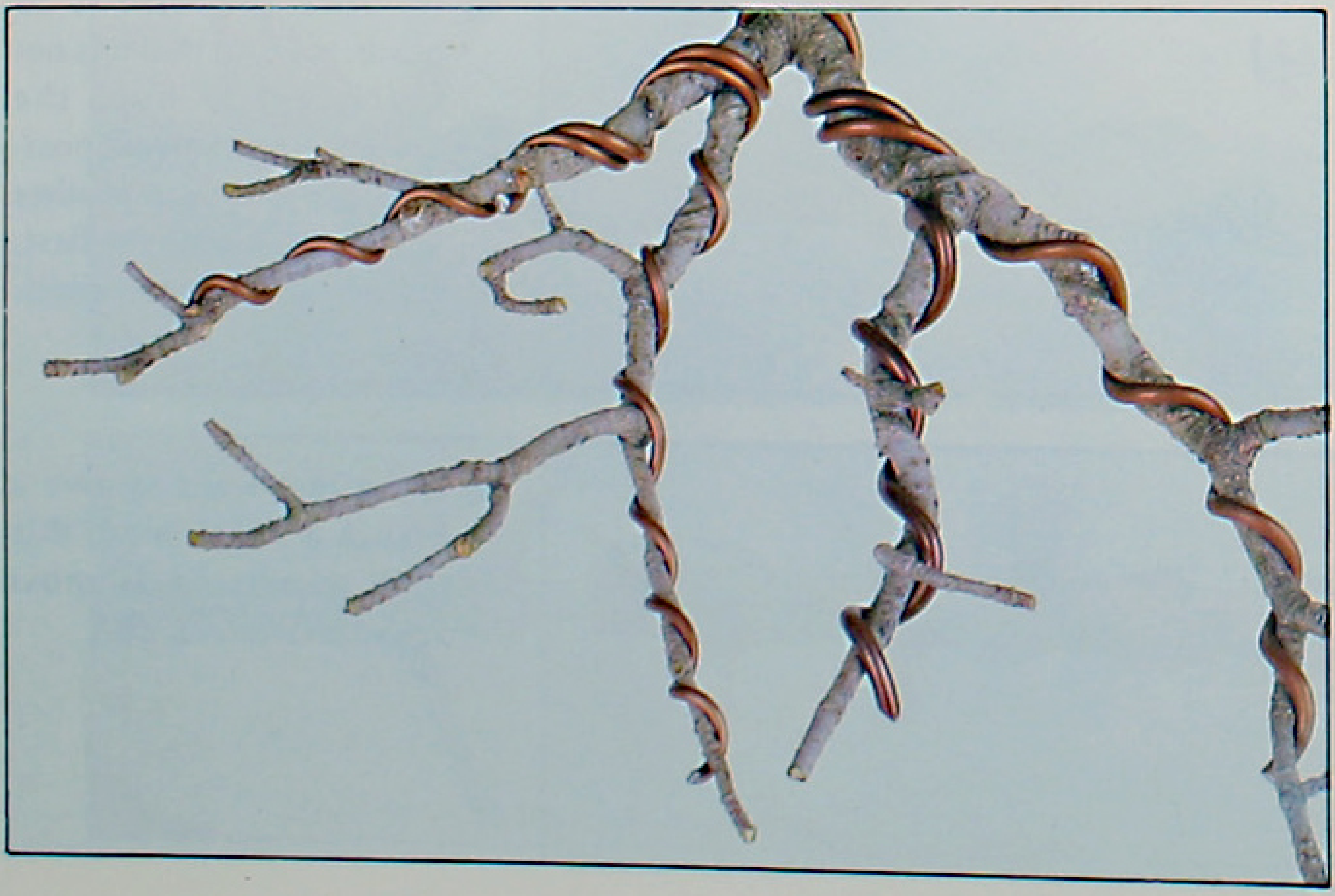
However, this season has its drawbacks: the branches of the trees in winter are not as flexible as in spring or summer. Wood tends to be more brittle and should a branch break, it will not heal until the following spring. One should also be most careful not to damage the buds when wiring in winter; these are next year's leaves.

By contrast, the tree is more flexible in spring, and one can better appreciate the position of the buds from which new leaves will emerge; it will be easier to avoid crushing them with the wire. Ramification is also not obscured by foliage. But shoots are soft and easy to break and it is easier to damage the bark. Branches are thickening rapidly which is both an advantage and a disadvantage; the new branch position will be achieved more quickly, yet wire may cut into the bark more rapidly.

For most conifers, the best time to wire is when the buds are not active, that is, the period between autumn, when they have already formed new buds, and spring, when the buds begin to grow. Also, during this period, they begin to shed their needles, and so we can see the branches more easily.



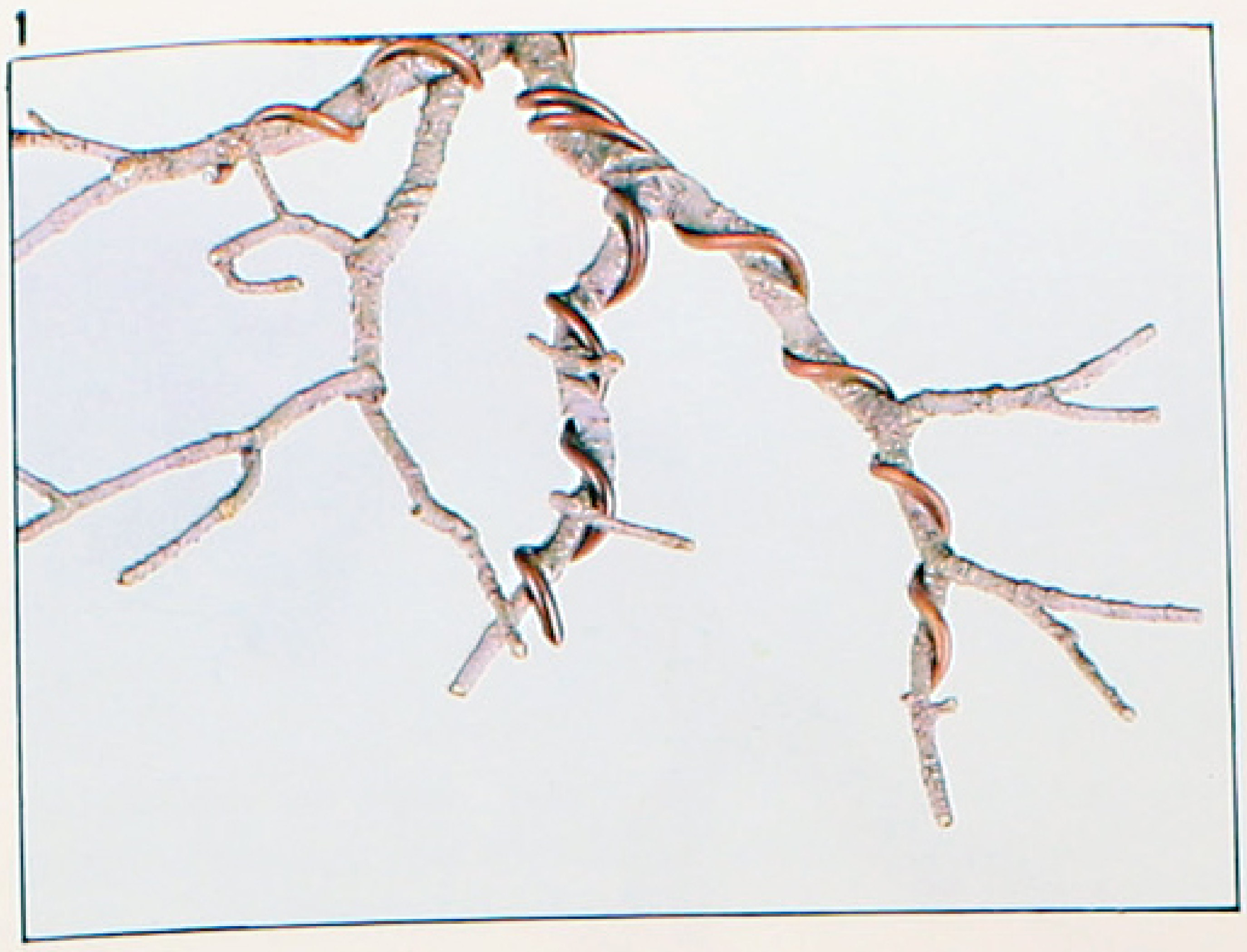
For this branch we are going to use three gauges of wire, depending on the thickness of the part being wired. We will begin by wiring the tree from the inside out. First on the point marked with a 1 and then on to the smaller sections marked with a 2, 3, and 4.



Here is the branch with some of the wire applied. We begin to explore some of the subtleties of good wiring technique on the following page.

Wiring branches

1



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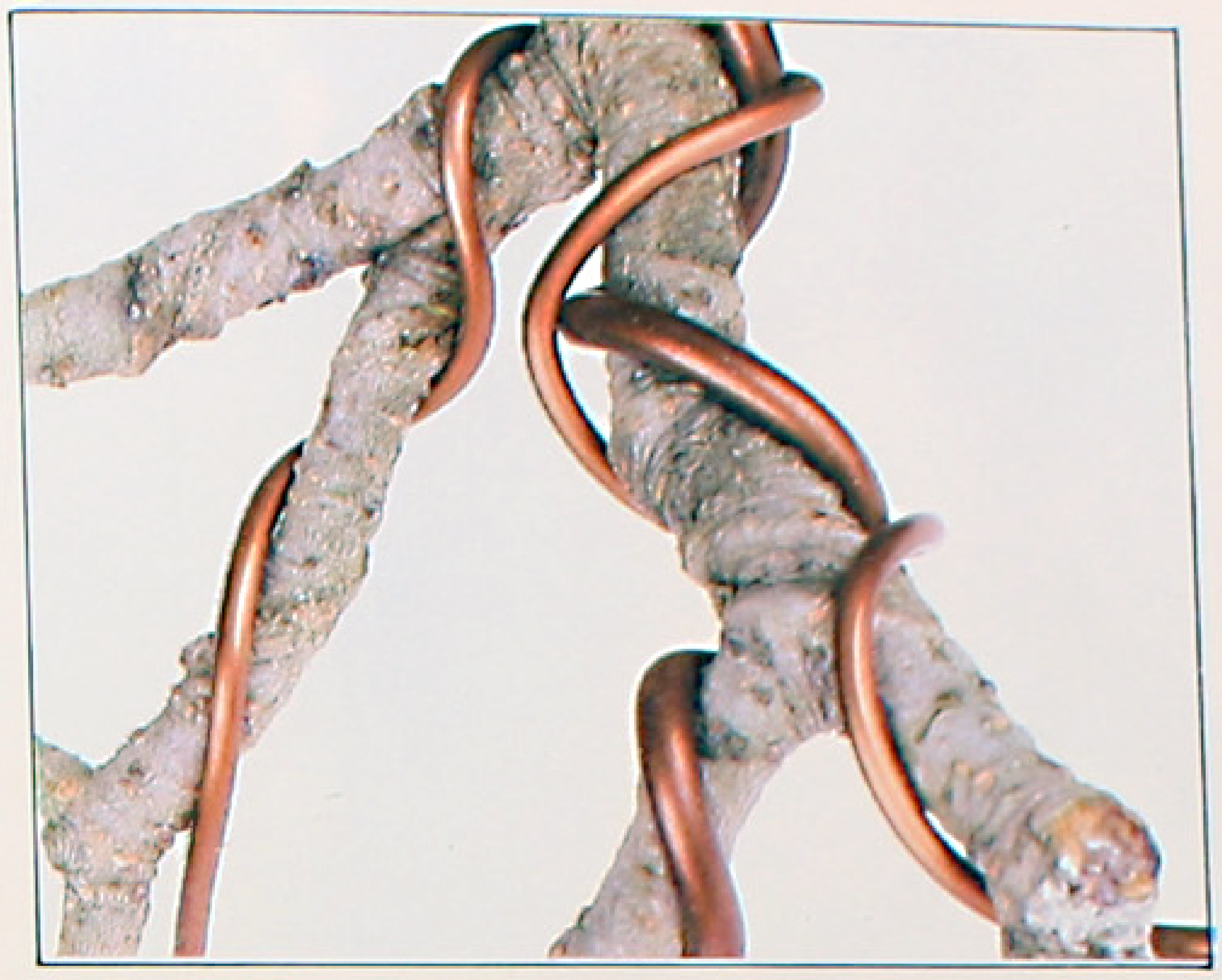
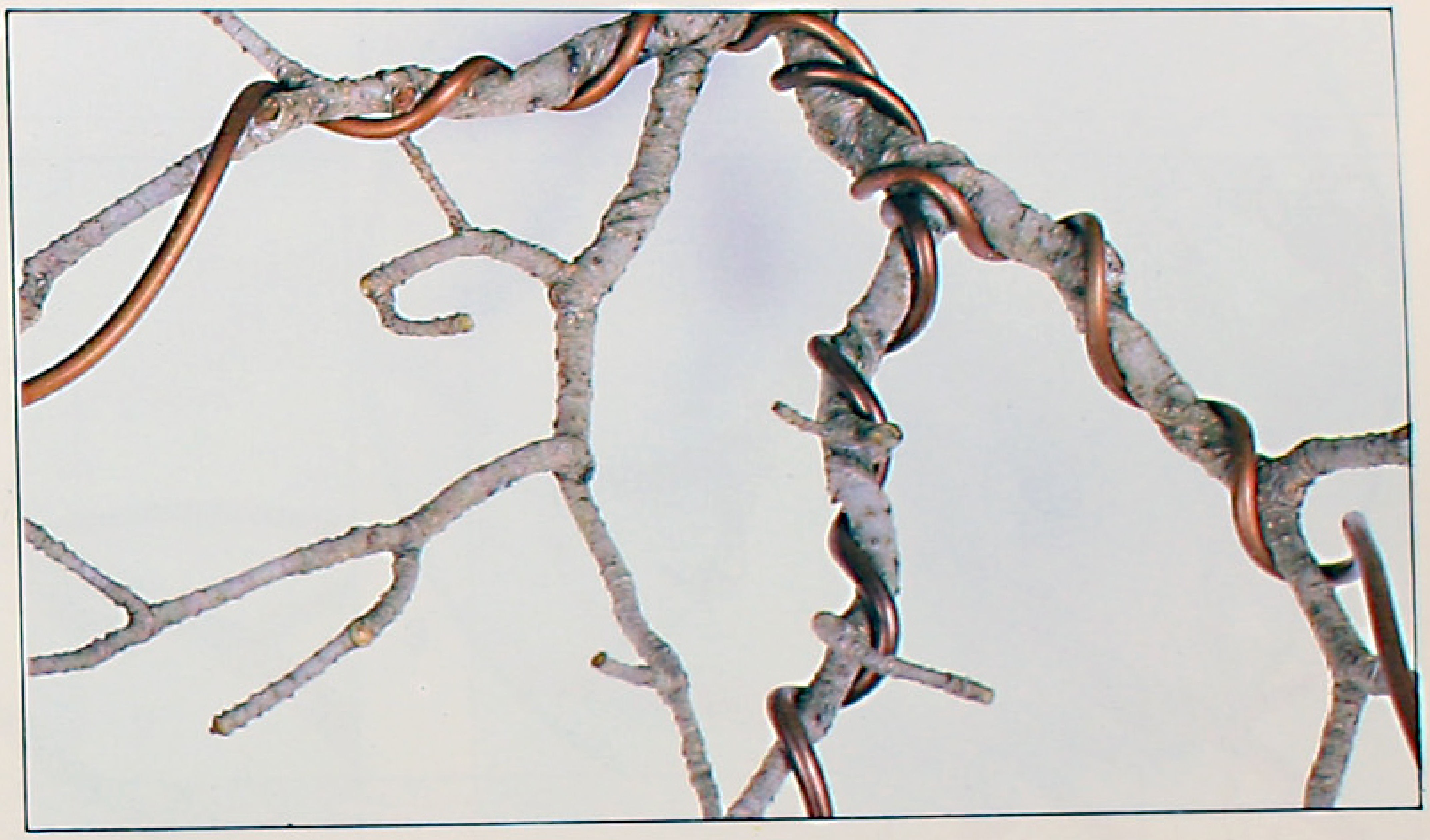


1 In the fork shown at the left, the thick wire will serve to secure the branch for the transition to the finer wire.

2 We must avoid crossing wires, because if we do, the wire will lose a great part of its capacity to position the branch.

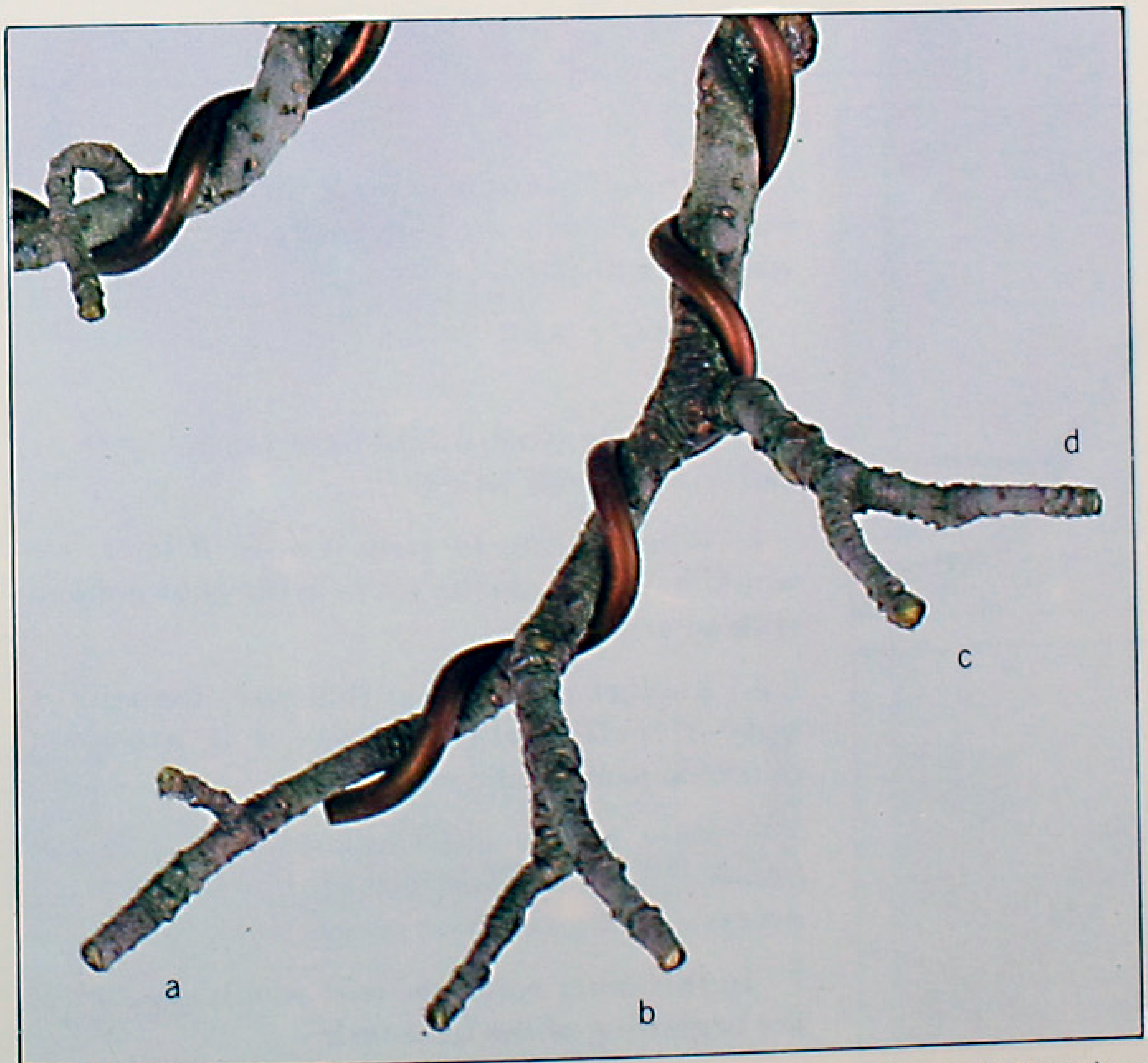
3



3 This solution is both right and wrong. Study the wiring on the fork at the right, consider the alternatives and then see photographs 4 and 5.

4 If the twig is going to bend to the left, the above solution is correct.

5 If the twig is going to bend to the right, the solution is incorrect. The arrows show the points where the wire separates from the bark.



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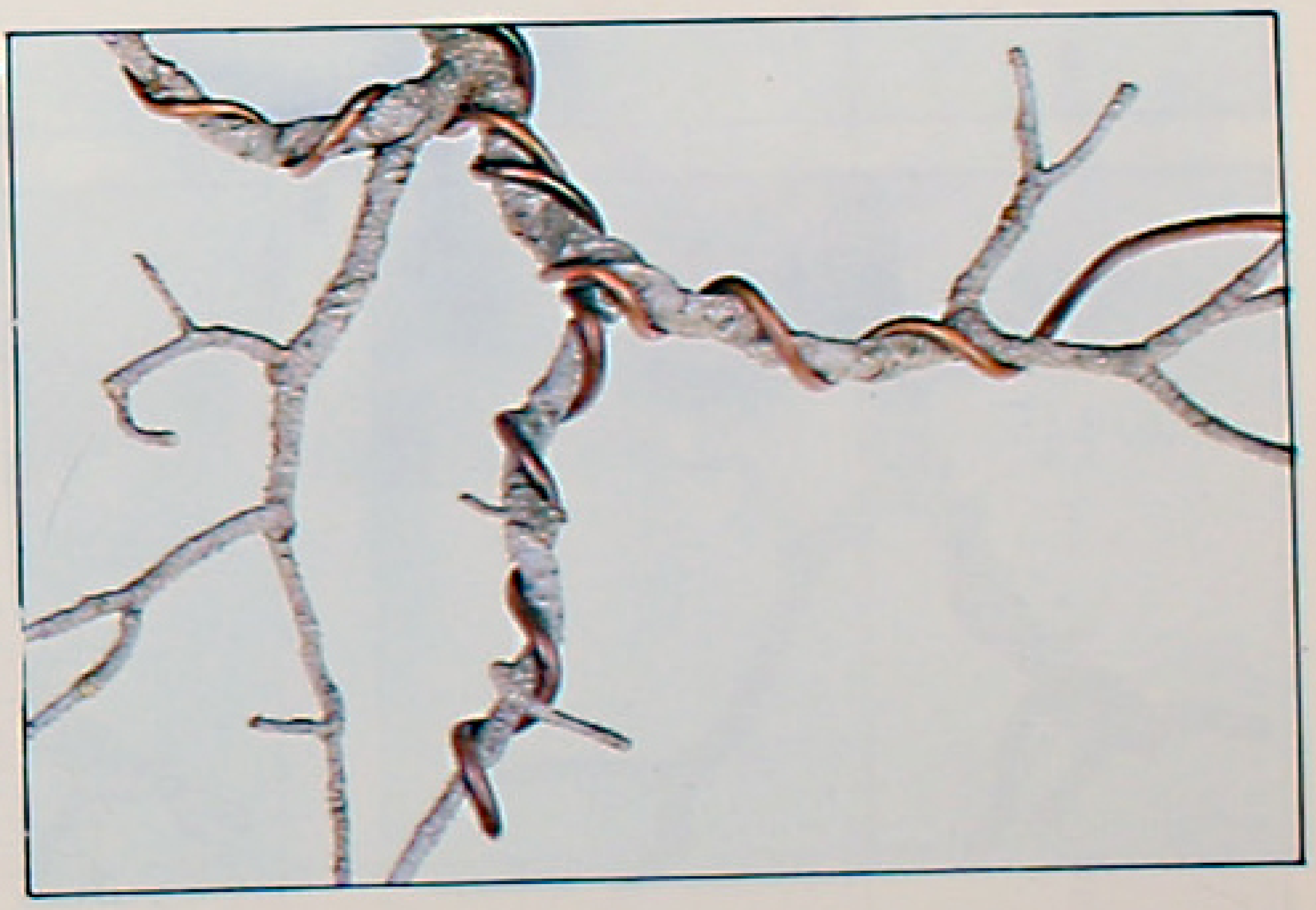

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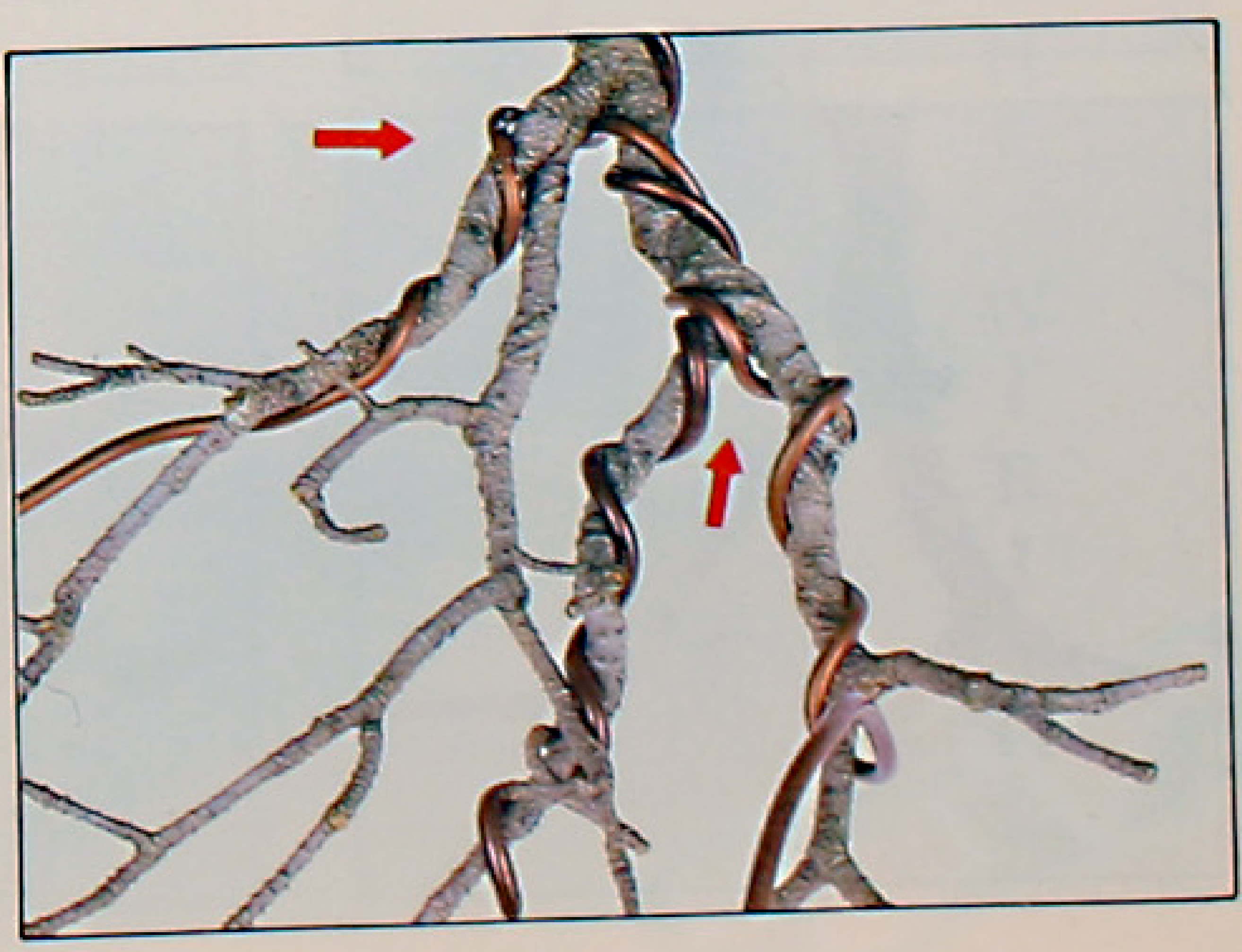
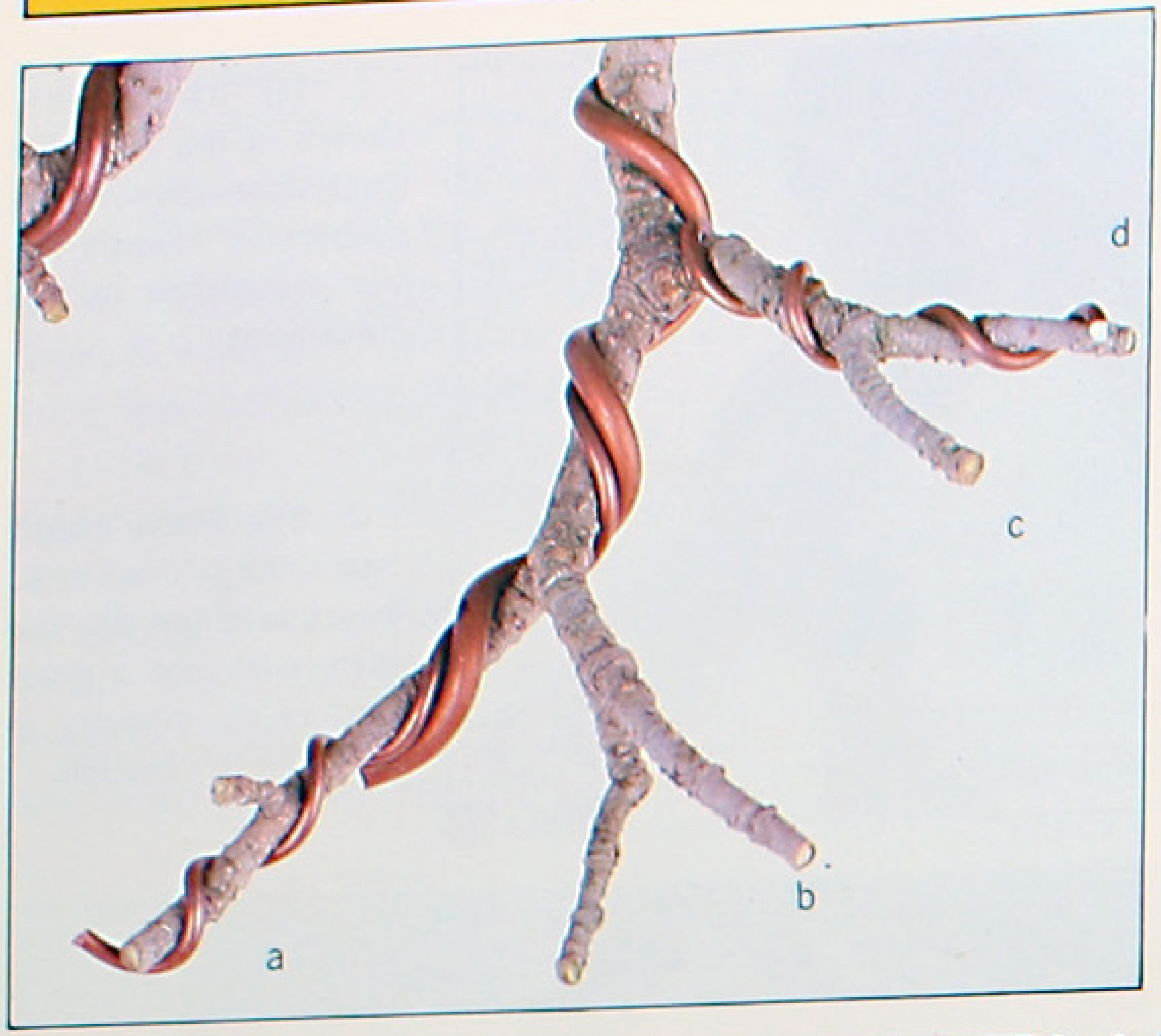


6 If it is necessary to apply several wires, think first in what direction the finer ones must go, to avoid crossing them later. Points a, b, c, and d need wiring.

Wiring branches

1



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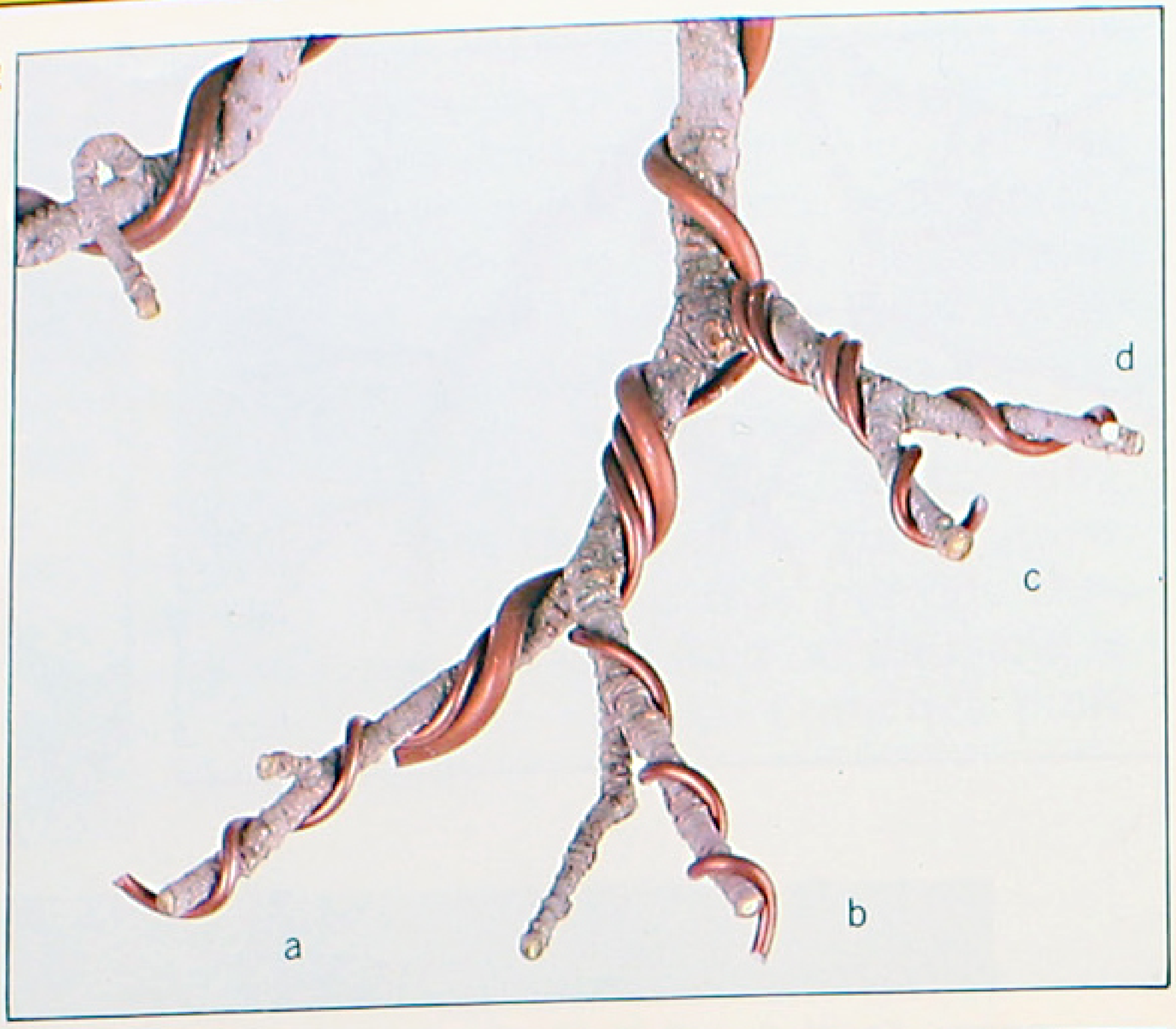

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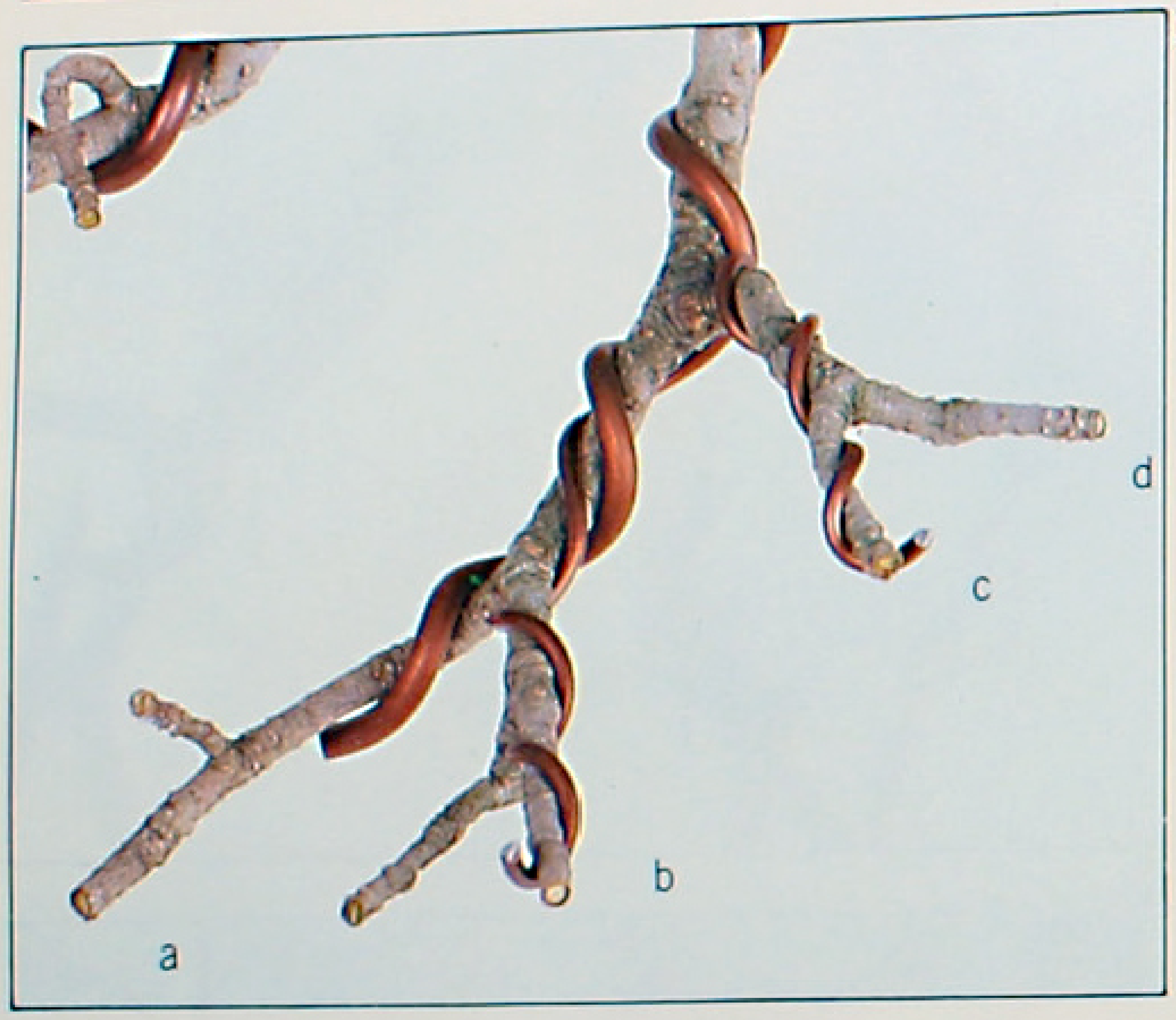

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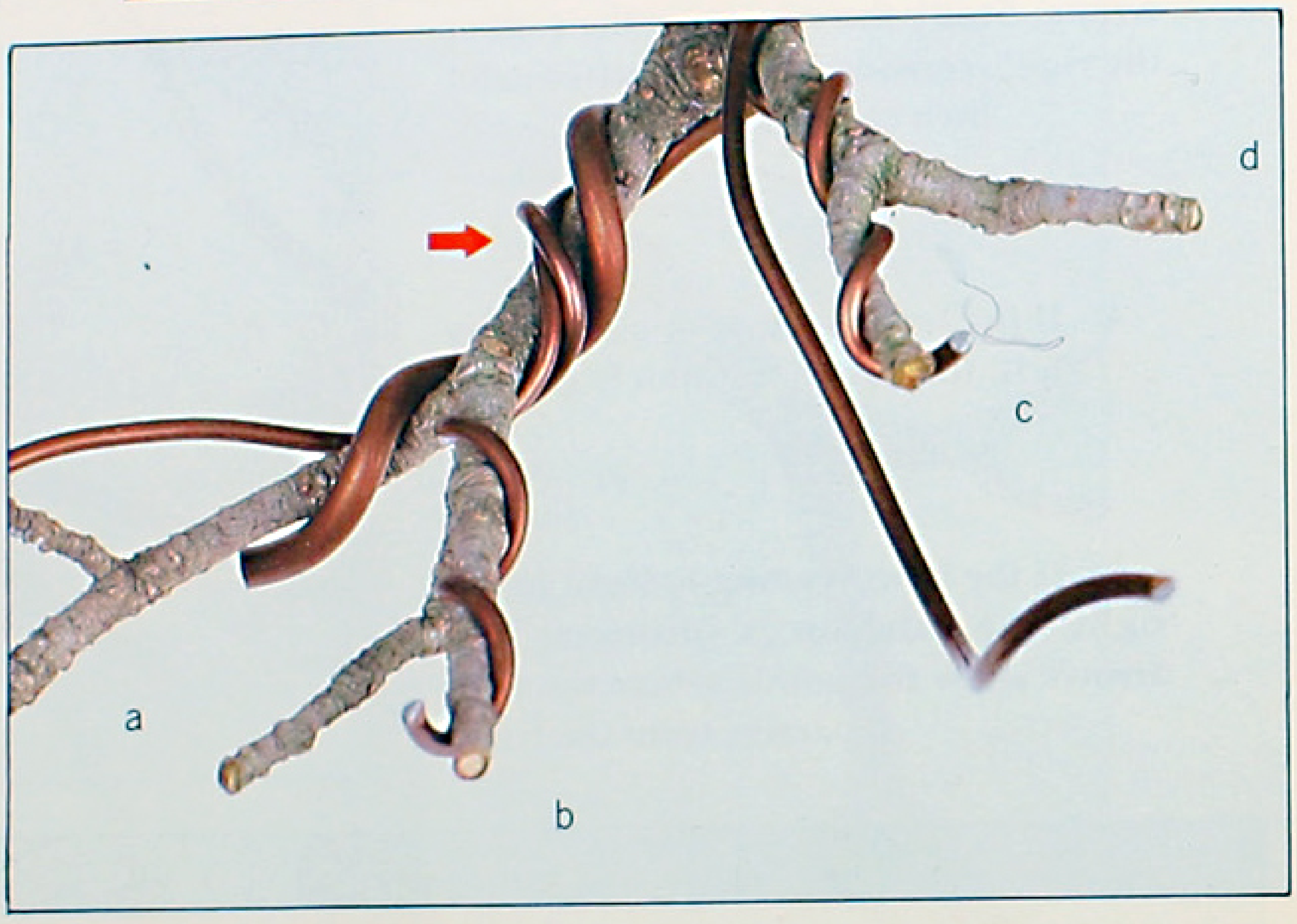

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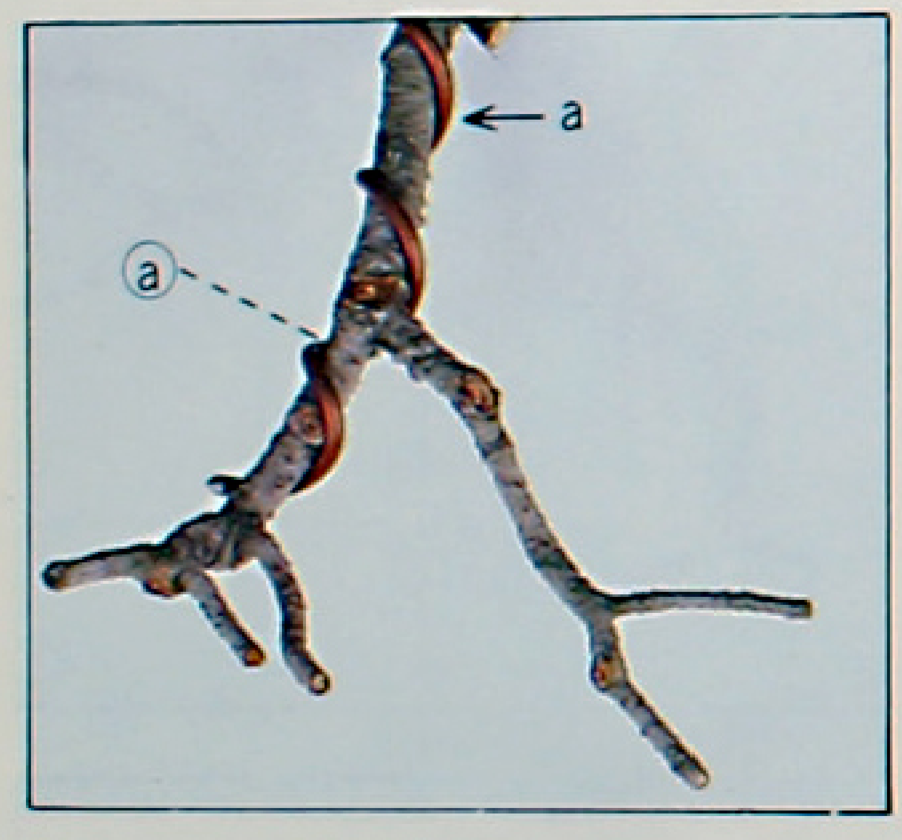

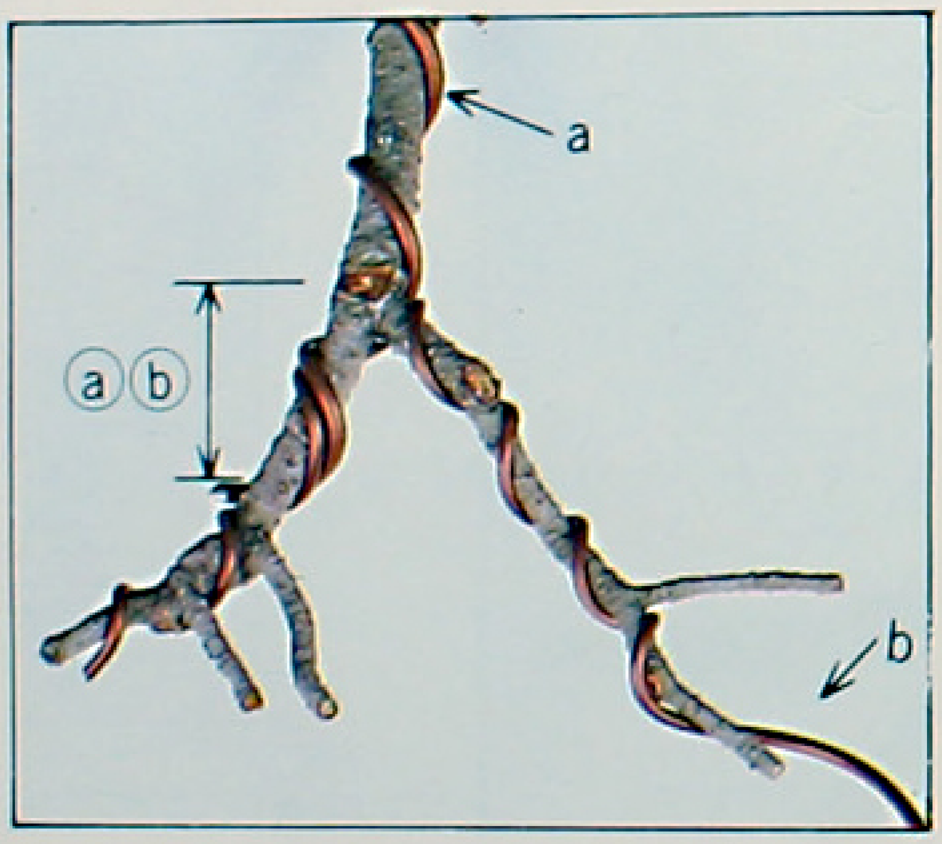

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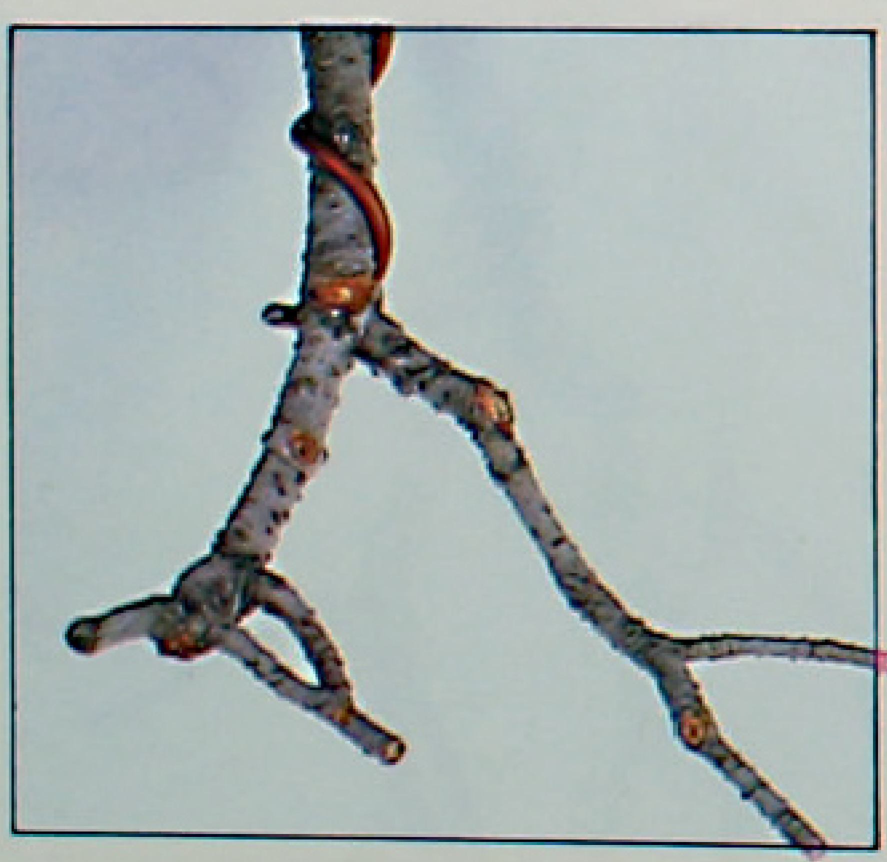
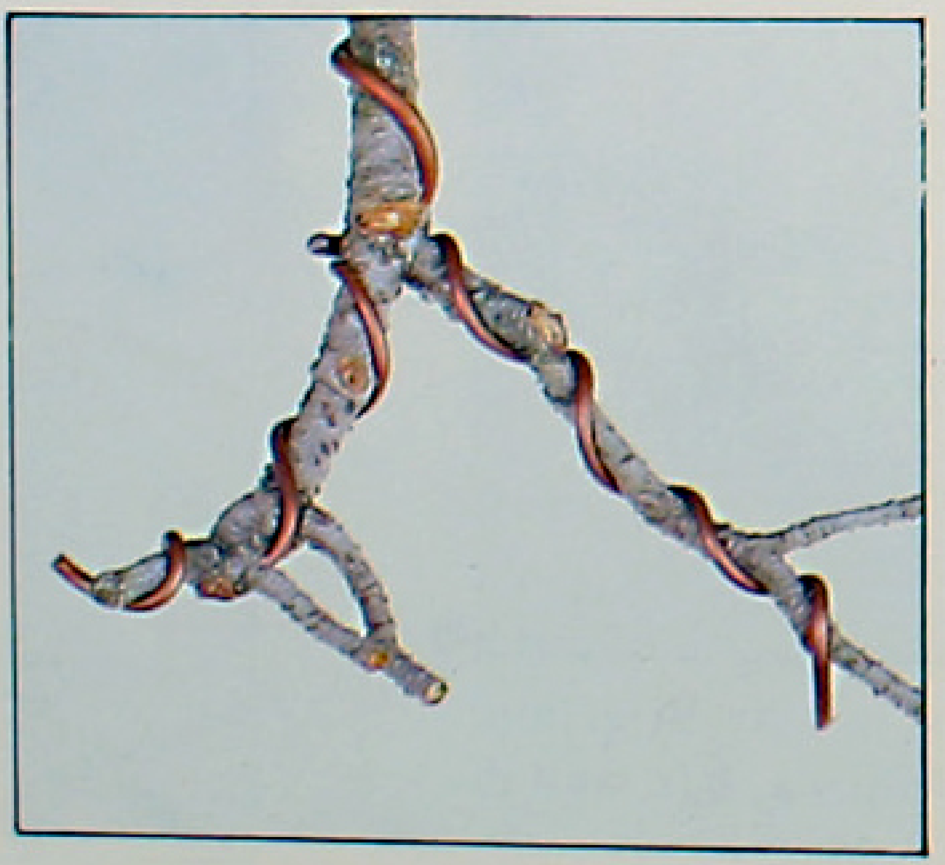




1 Think first how to place the finer wires, in order not to cross the larger wire. We will begin wiring *a* with *d*.

2 Then, *c* with *b*, and the branch is totally wired.

3 Let's see what would have happened if we had wired *c* with *b* first.

4 When trying to wire *a* with *d* later, we would have to cross the wires in the zone marked with an arrow.

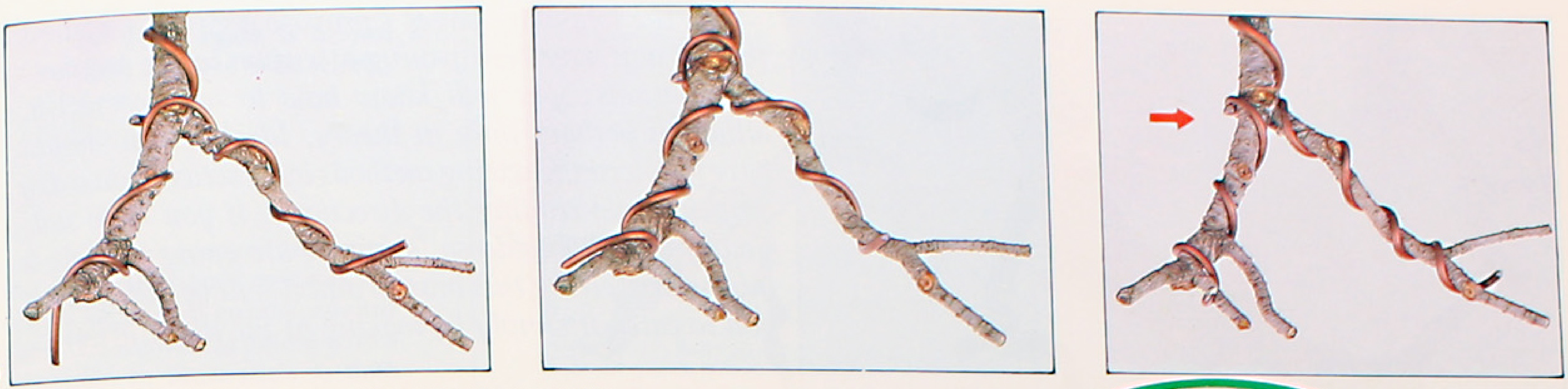
5 Another example: in this case, the wire is only effective at *a*. In zone *a* it provides reinforcement for the next wire.

6 Wire *b* now unites the two ends of the branch. The space *ab* is what permits us to give the necessary curves to these twigs.

7 In this other solution, wire *a* only reaches to the beginning of the little fork.

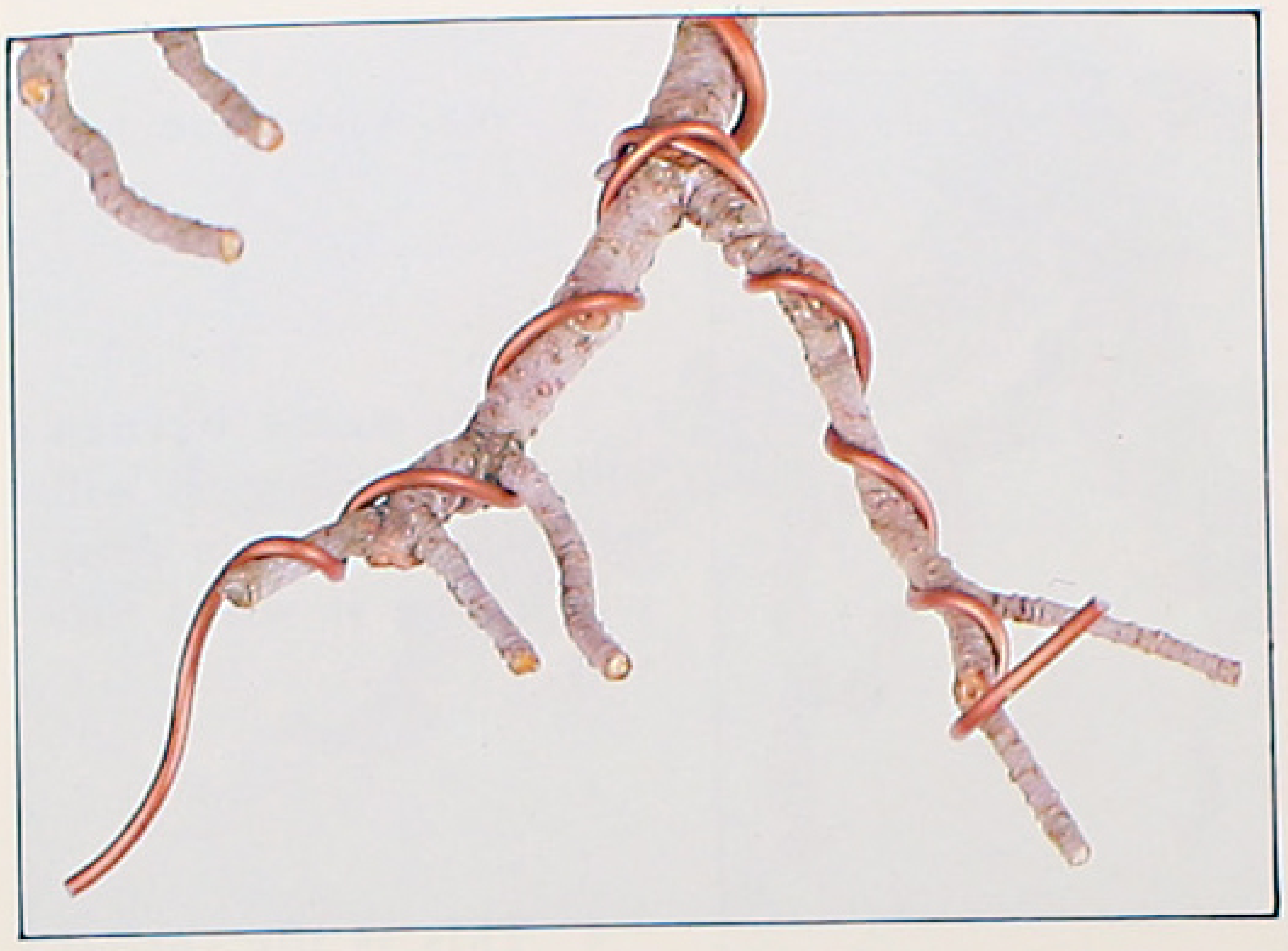
8 The only possibility for putting on a new wire is to fasten it to the same little fork.

Wiring branches


1

1 In any of these ways, the wire is correctly placed, although the solution on the right is best because of better reinforcement.

2 A totally incorrect solution: the branch is completely strangled. (See photo 3.)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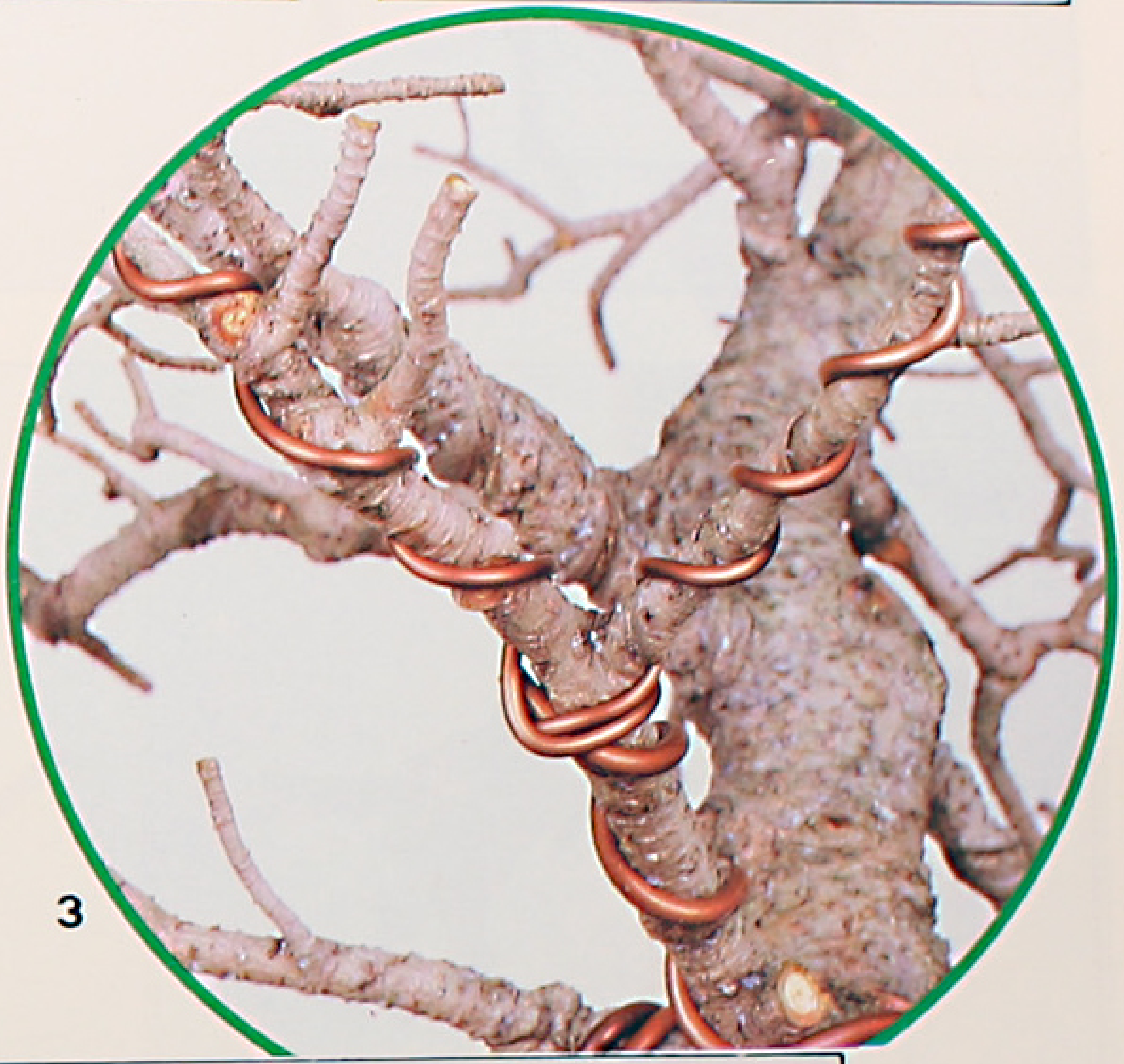
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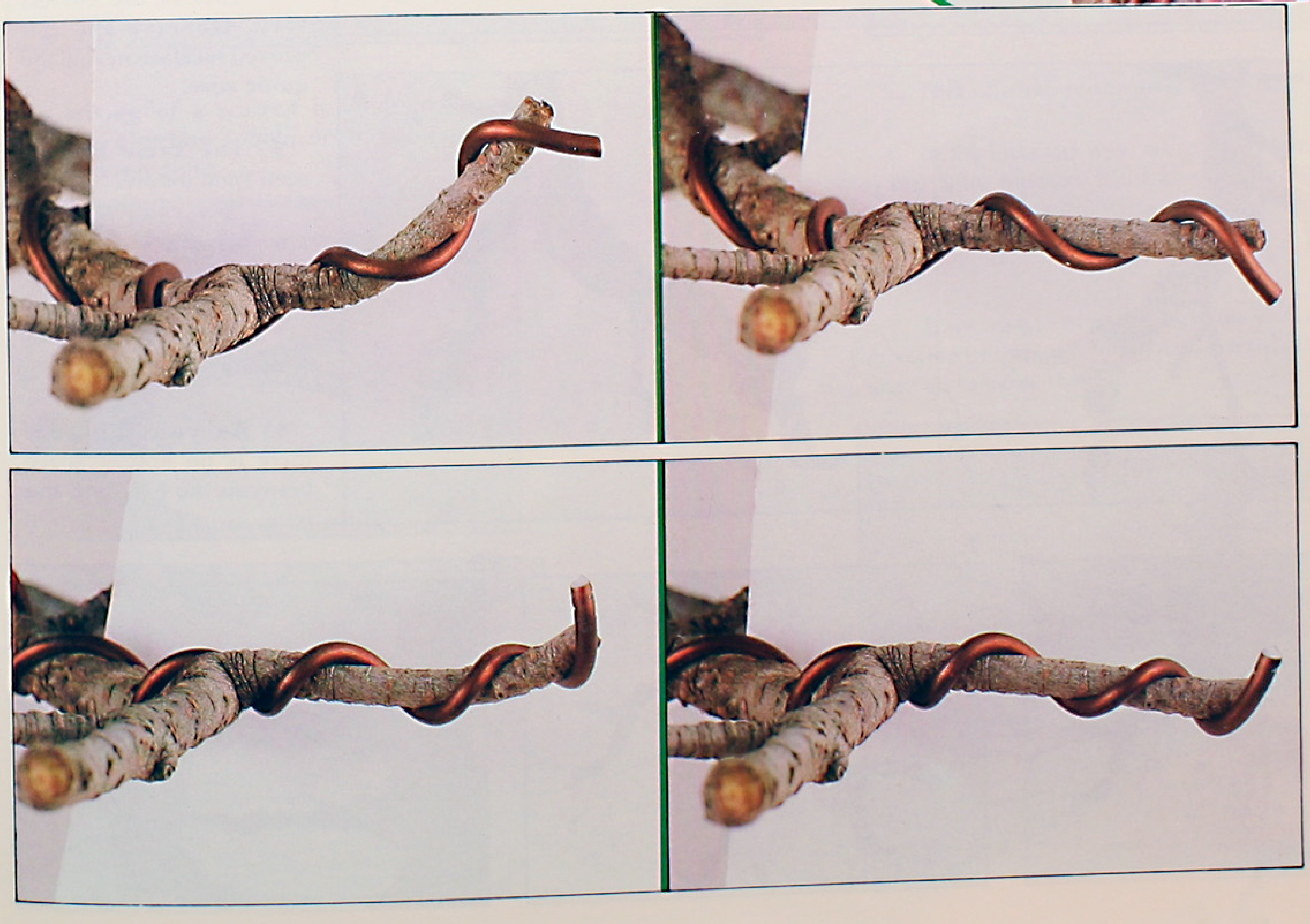
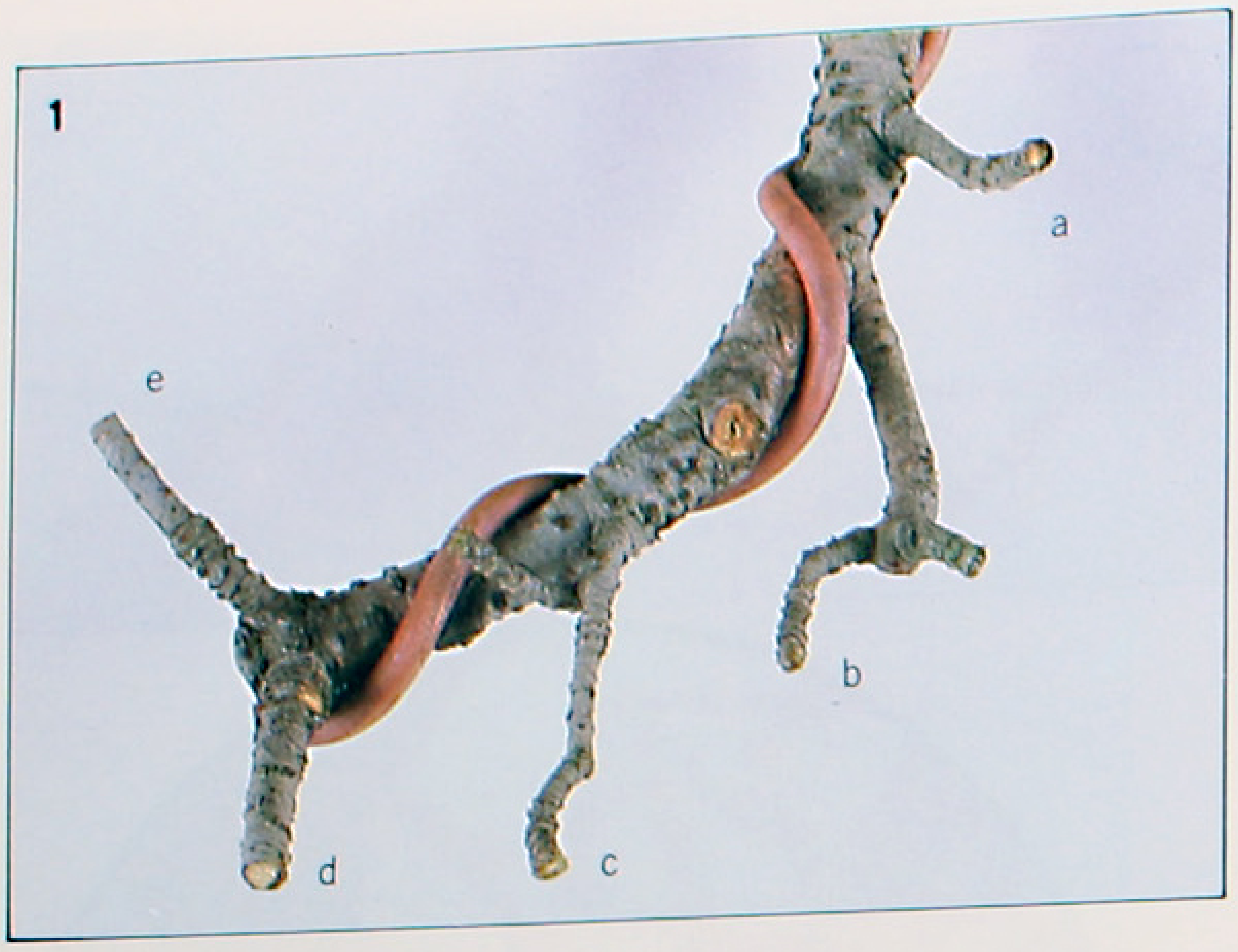
FINISHING THE WIRING

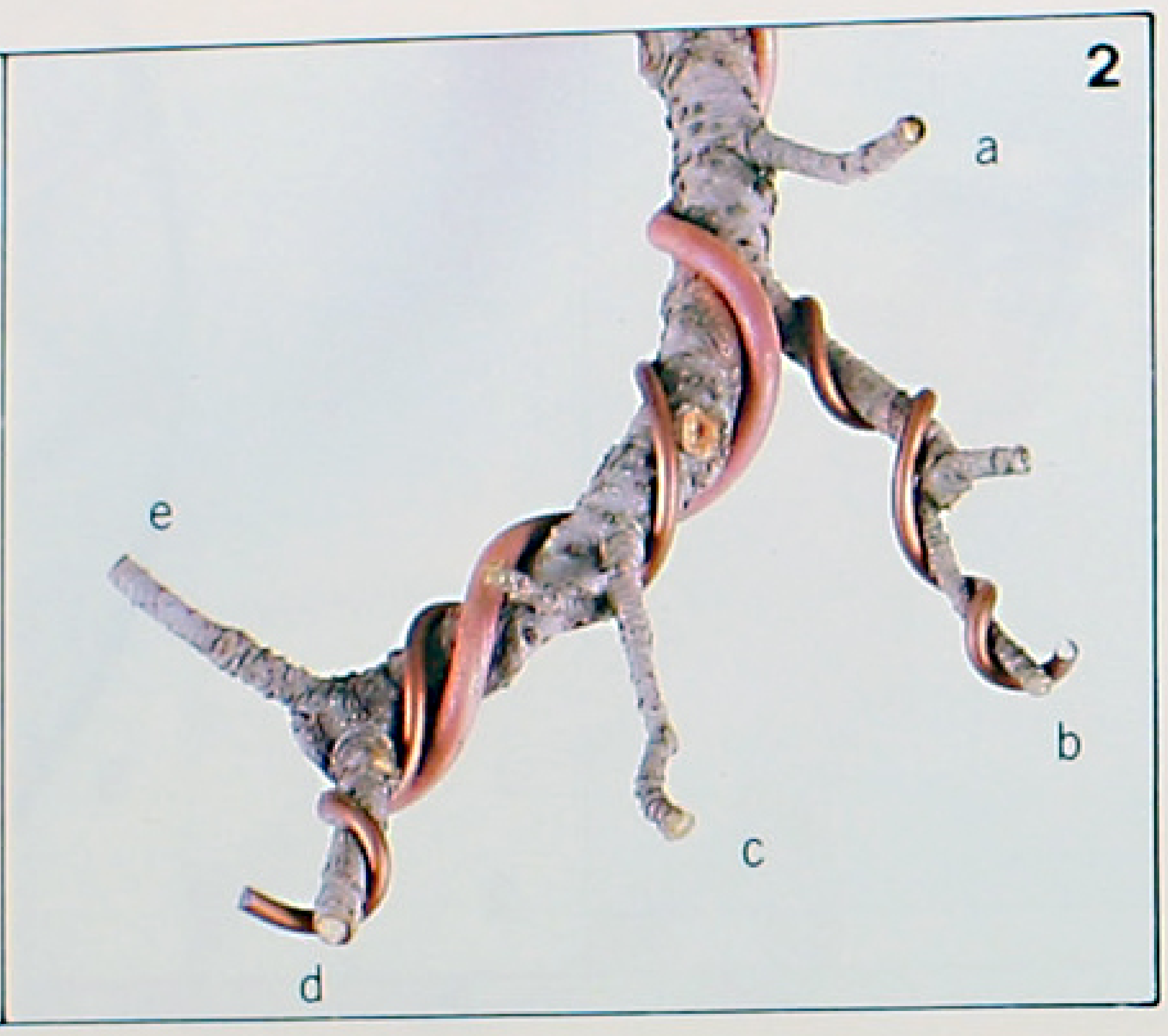


5 The wiring game

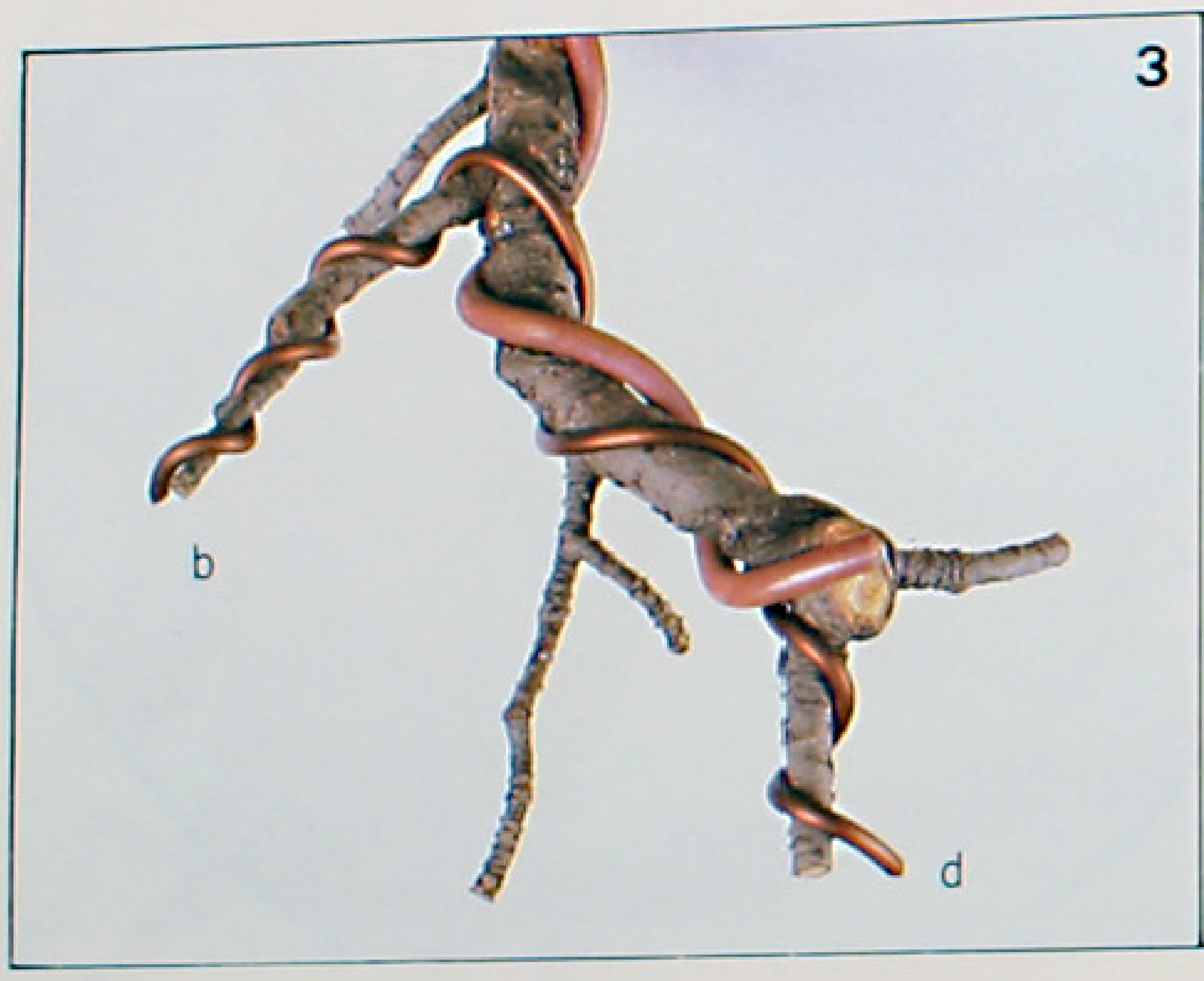
On the following pages I propose a game. I assume that, if you have been paying attention to the previous explanations, you will know how to wire correctly, although perhaps only in theory. Ideally, you should have followed the wiring methods by practicing on a dry branch while reading the directions. If you have not, now is the time to do so, since we are going to make a mistake in wiring this branch and it will be difficult for you to catch it simply by looking at the illustrations.



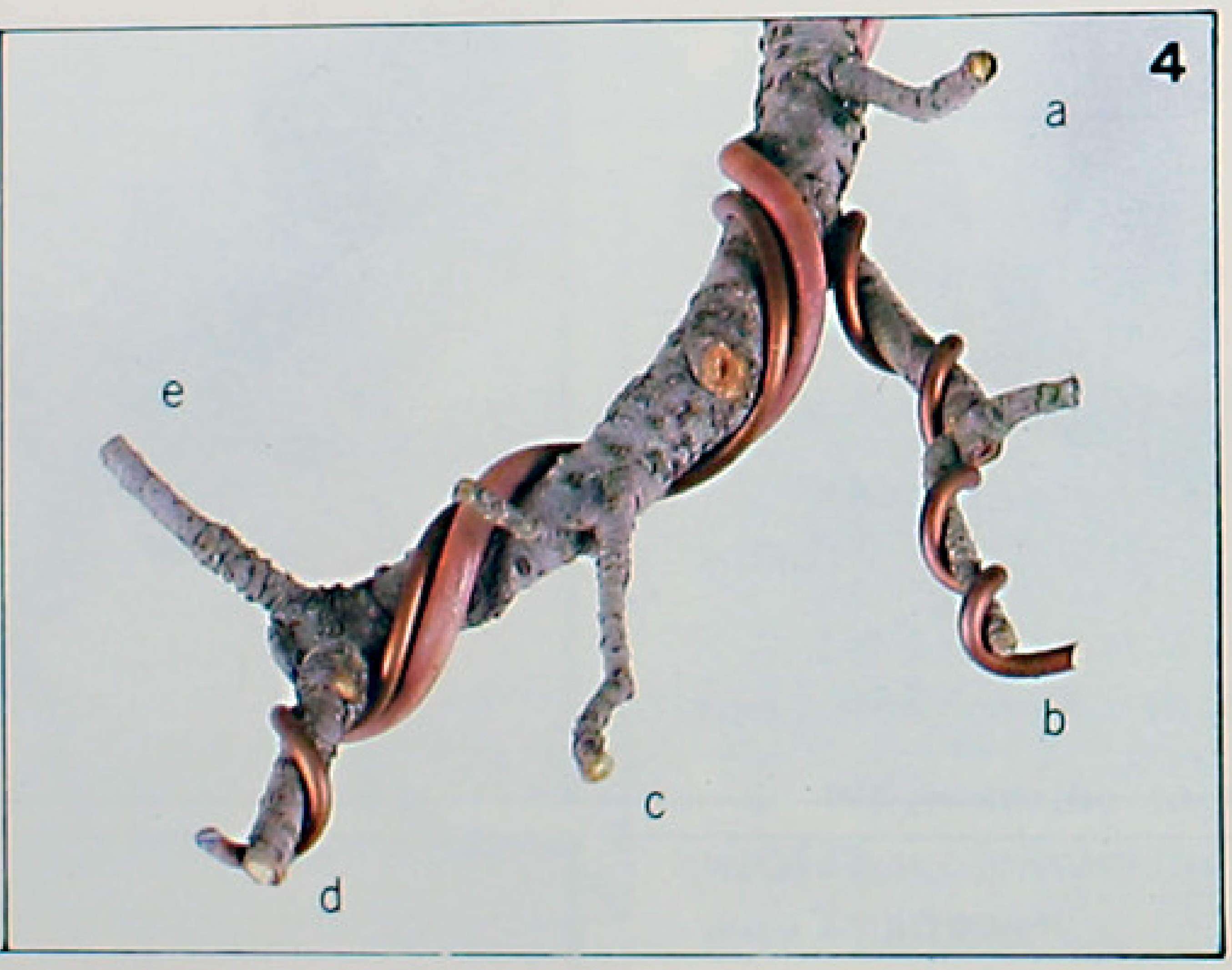
1 We wish to wire *a, b, c,* and *d.* First we put in place the main wire, which serves as a guide.



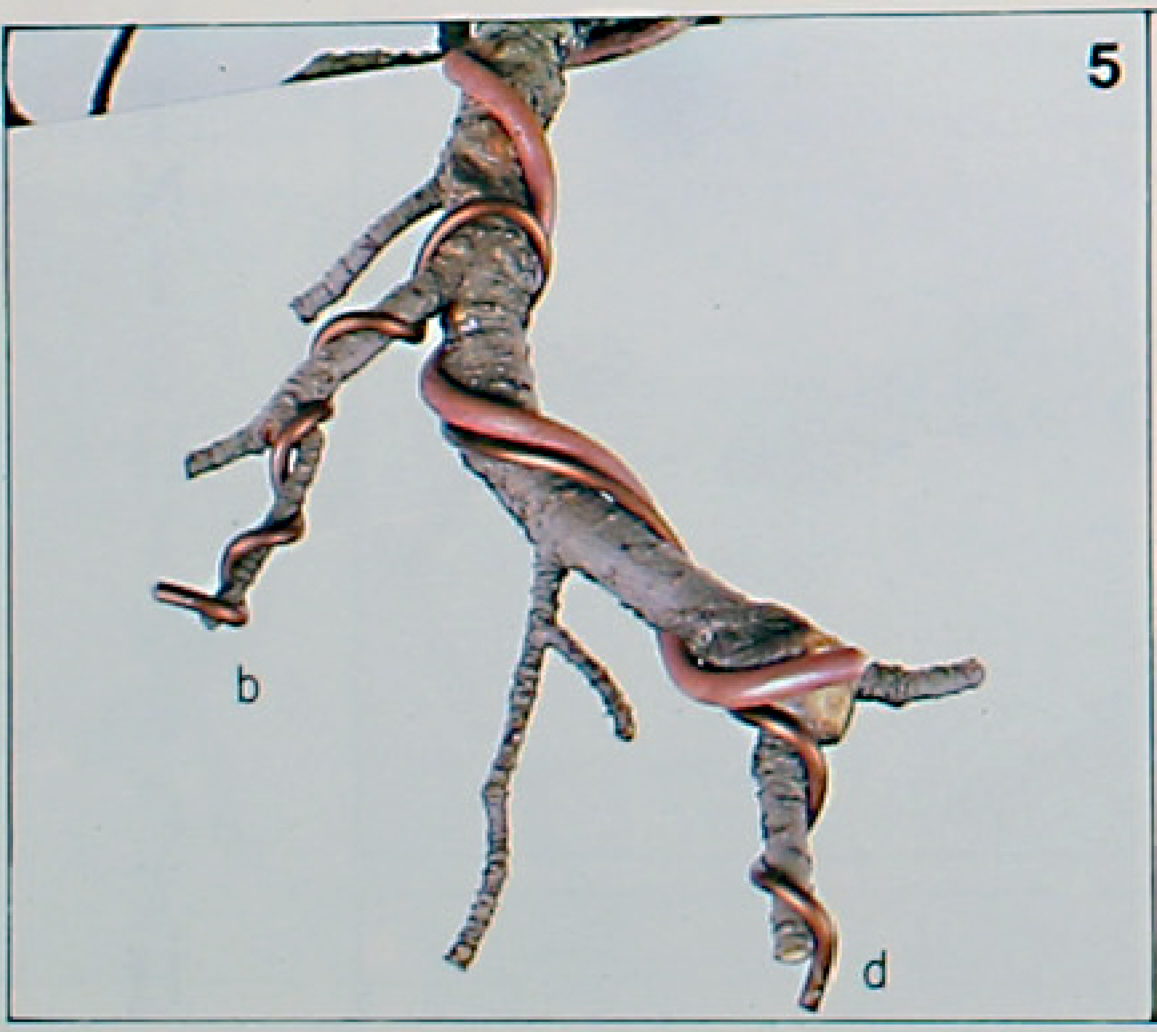
2 We wire branch *b* with *d.*



3 The same branch seen from below. It will be difficult not to cross wires later if wired this way.

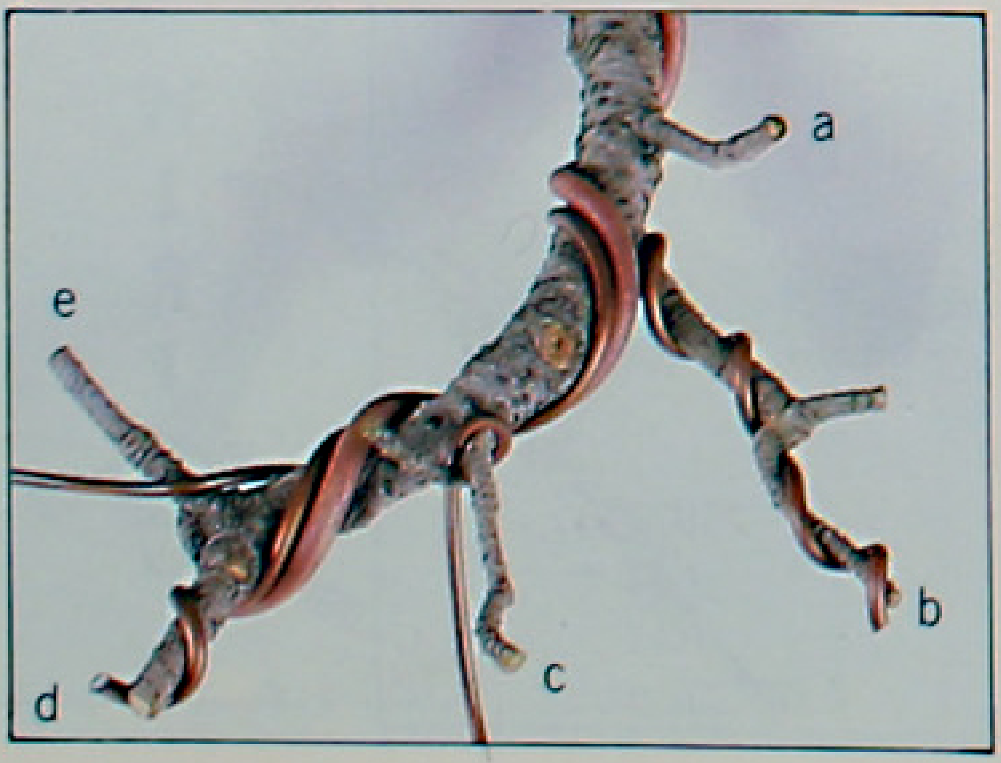


4 This is the correct way. Observe the improved location next to the guide wire.



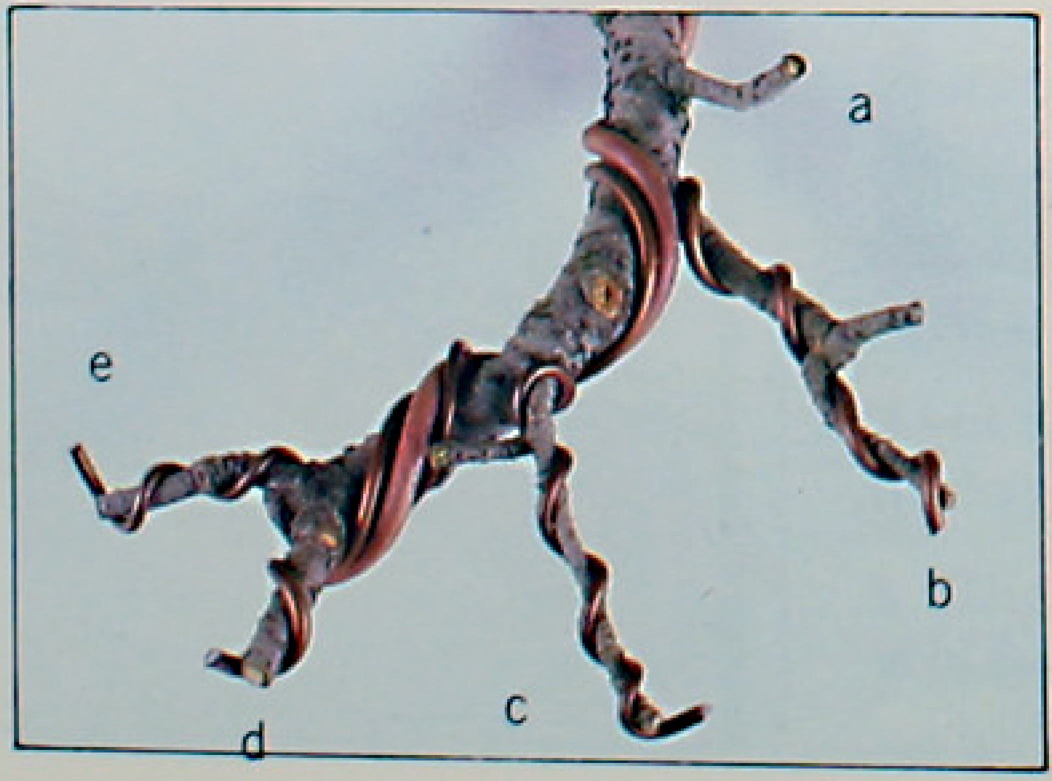
5 The same branch seen from below.

6



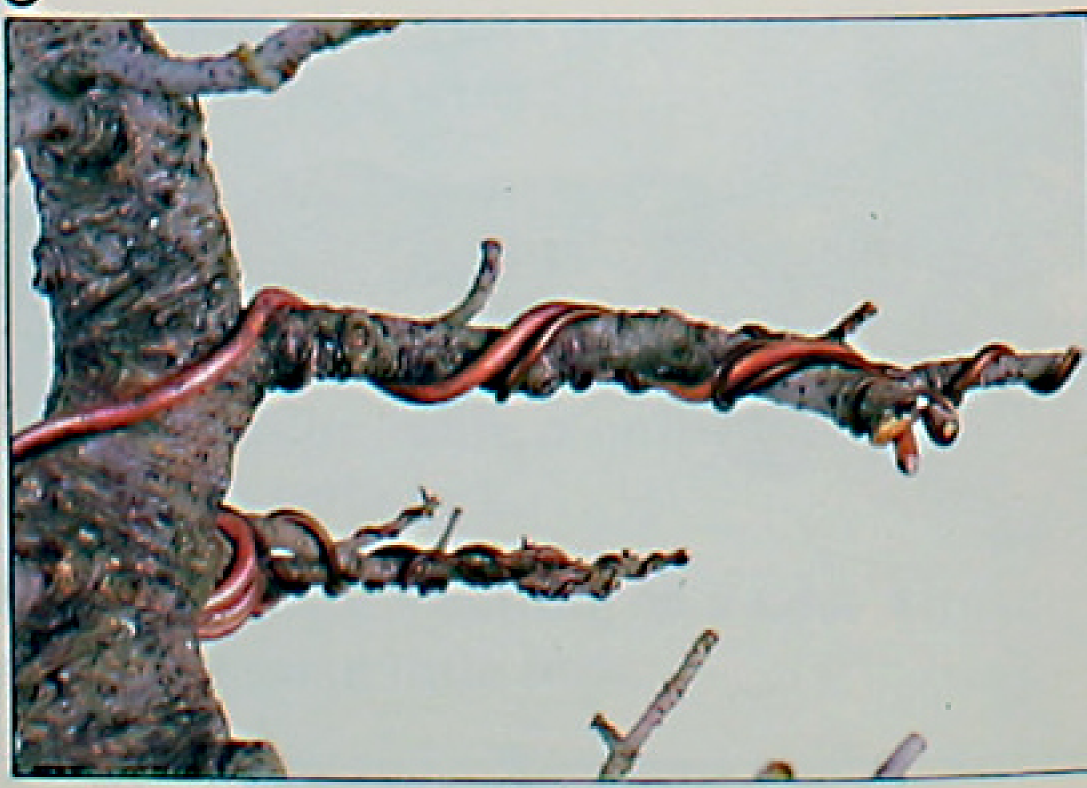
6 Now we wire branch *c* with *e.*

7



7 All that is left is to wire branch *a.*

8

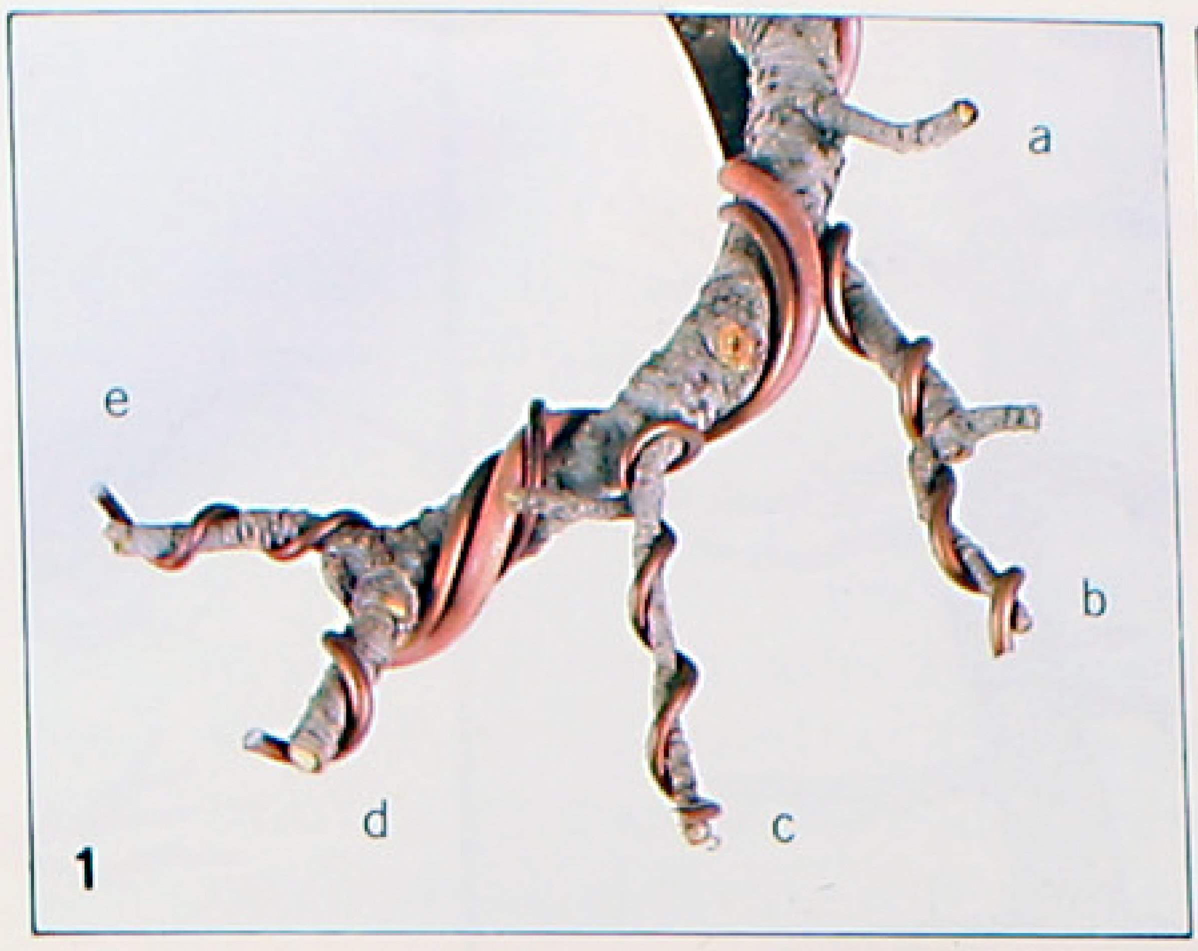


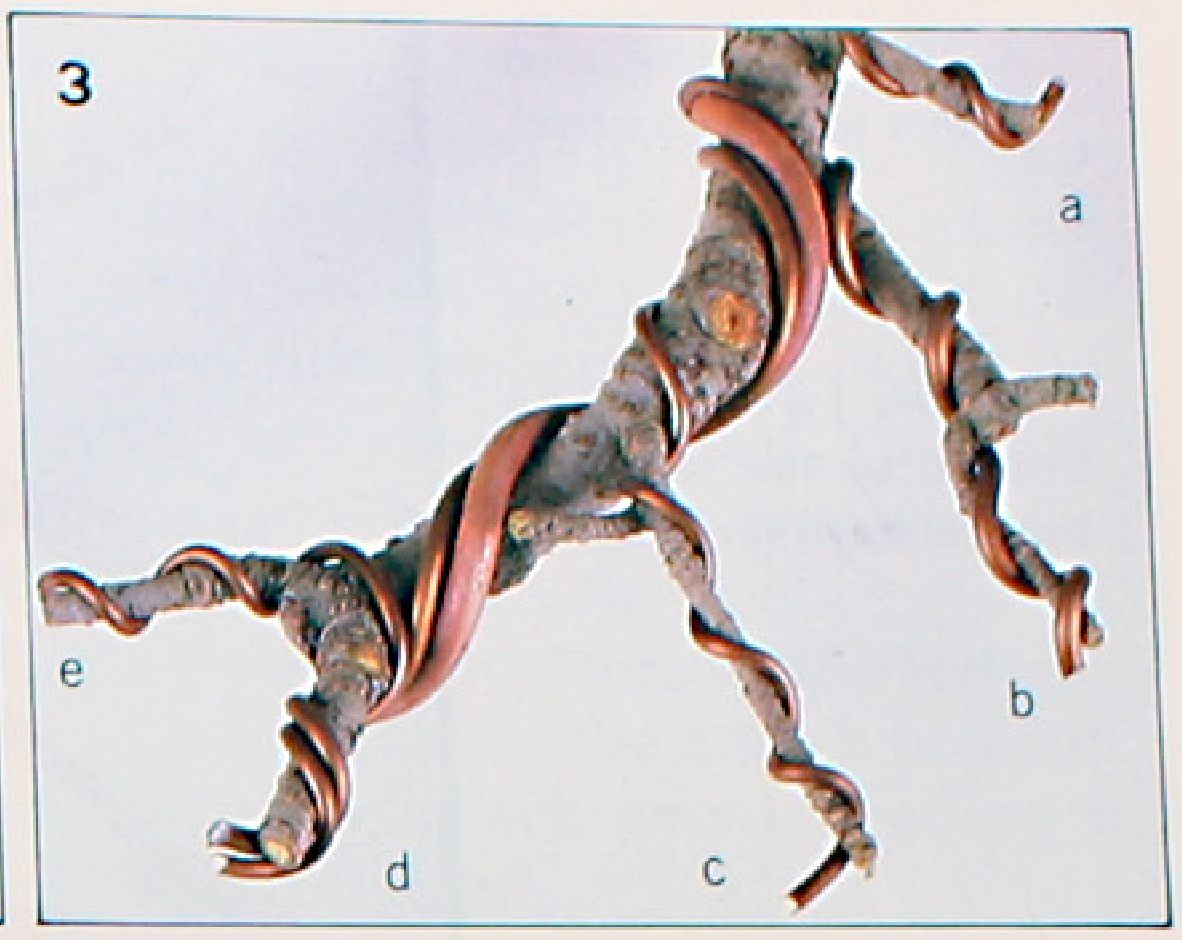
8 As you can see, there is no hollow space between the bark and the wire.

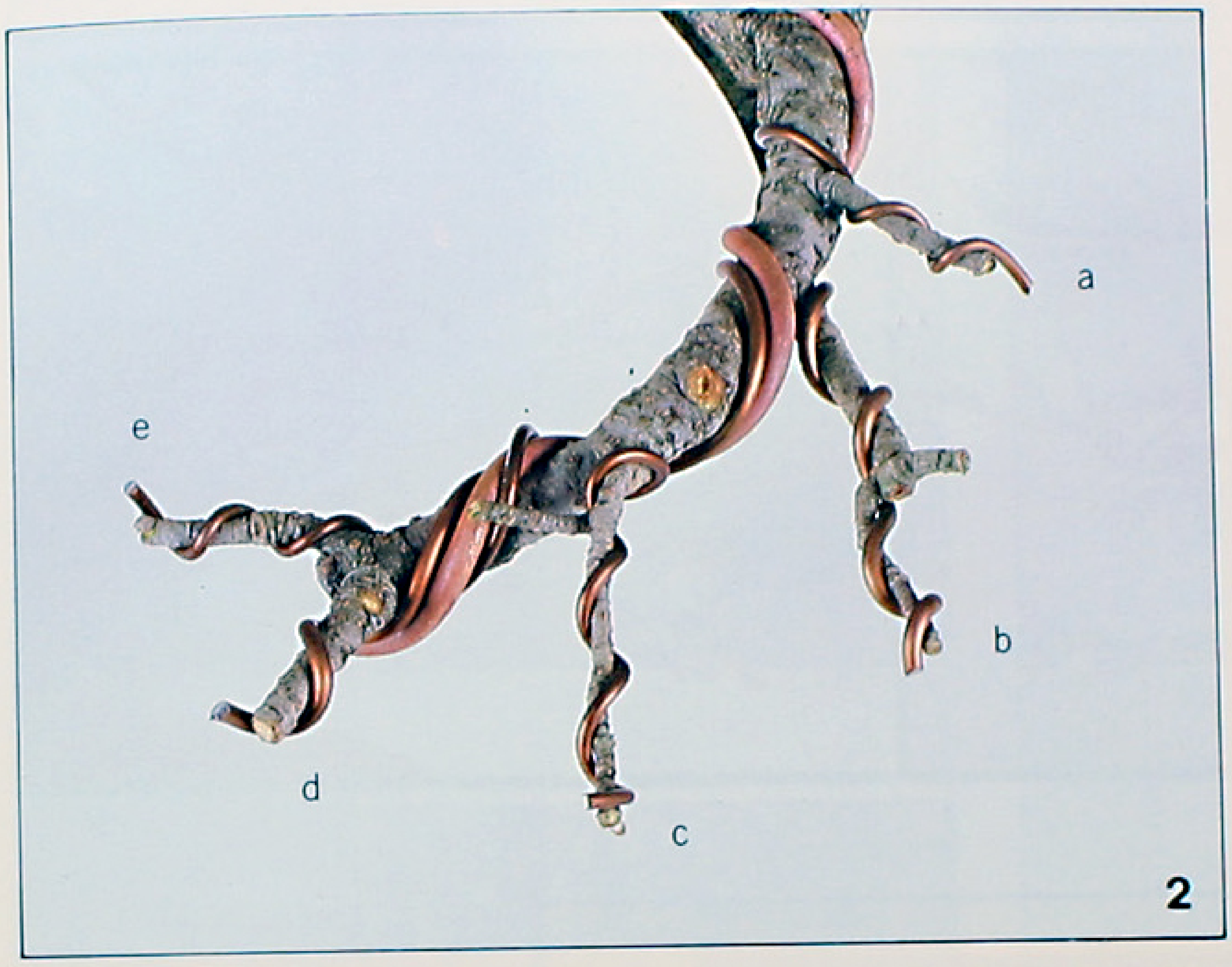
The wiring game

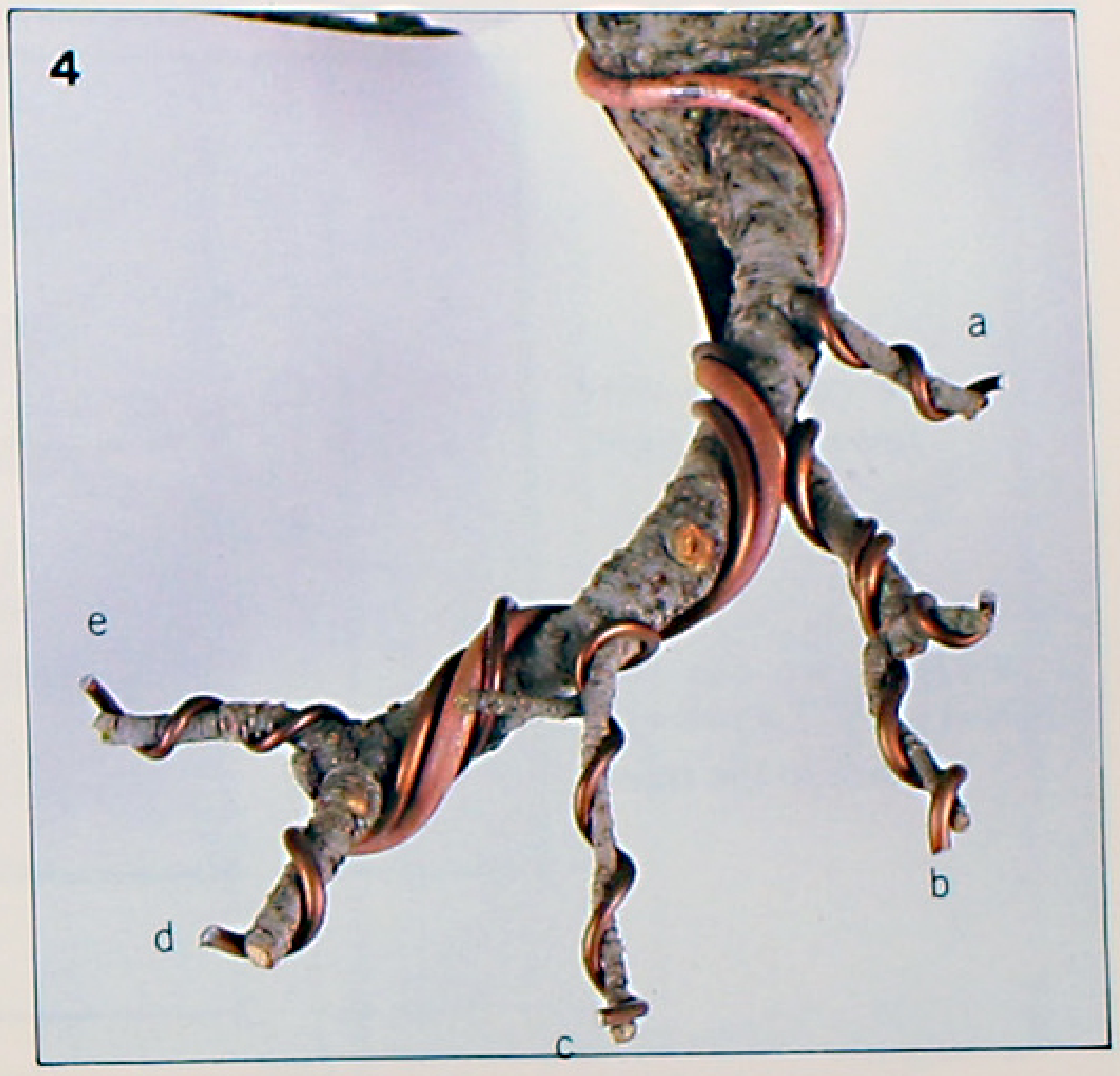
1 Here again is branch *a* which remains to be wired.

2 Branch *a* is wired following the guide wire back towards the trunk to a convenient anchor point. Or it could be paired with *b* as shown in illustration 4. Both are INCORRECT, but not because of branch *a*.

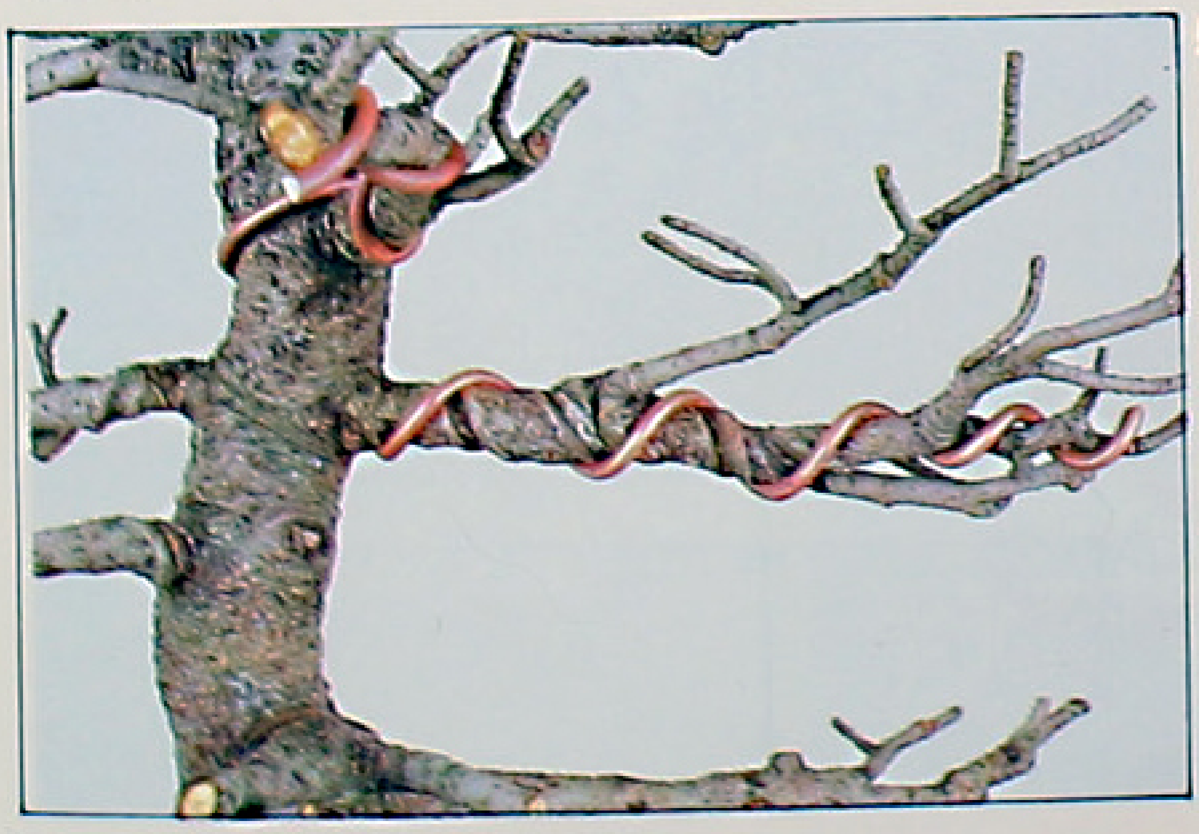








The wiring of a scarred branch: in the opposite direction (photo 5); in the same direction (photo 6).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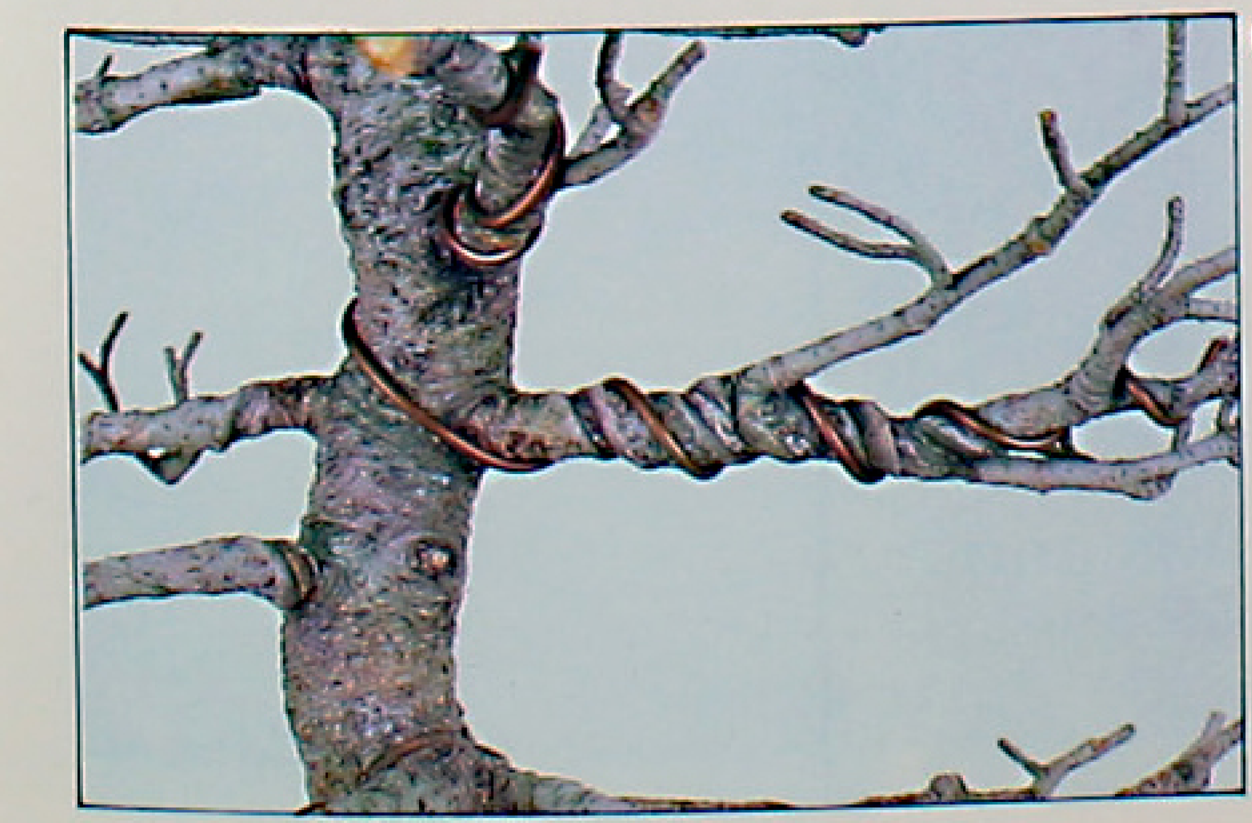
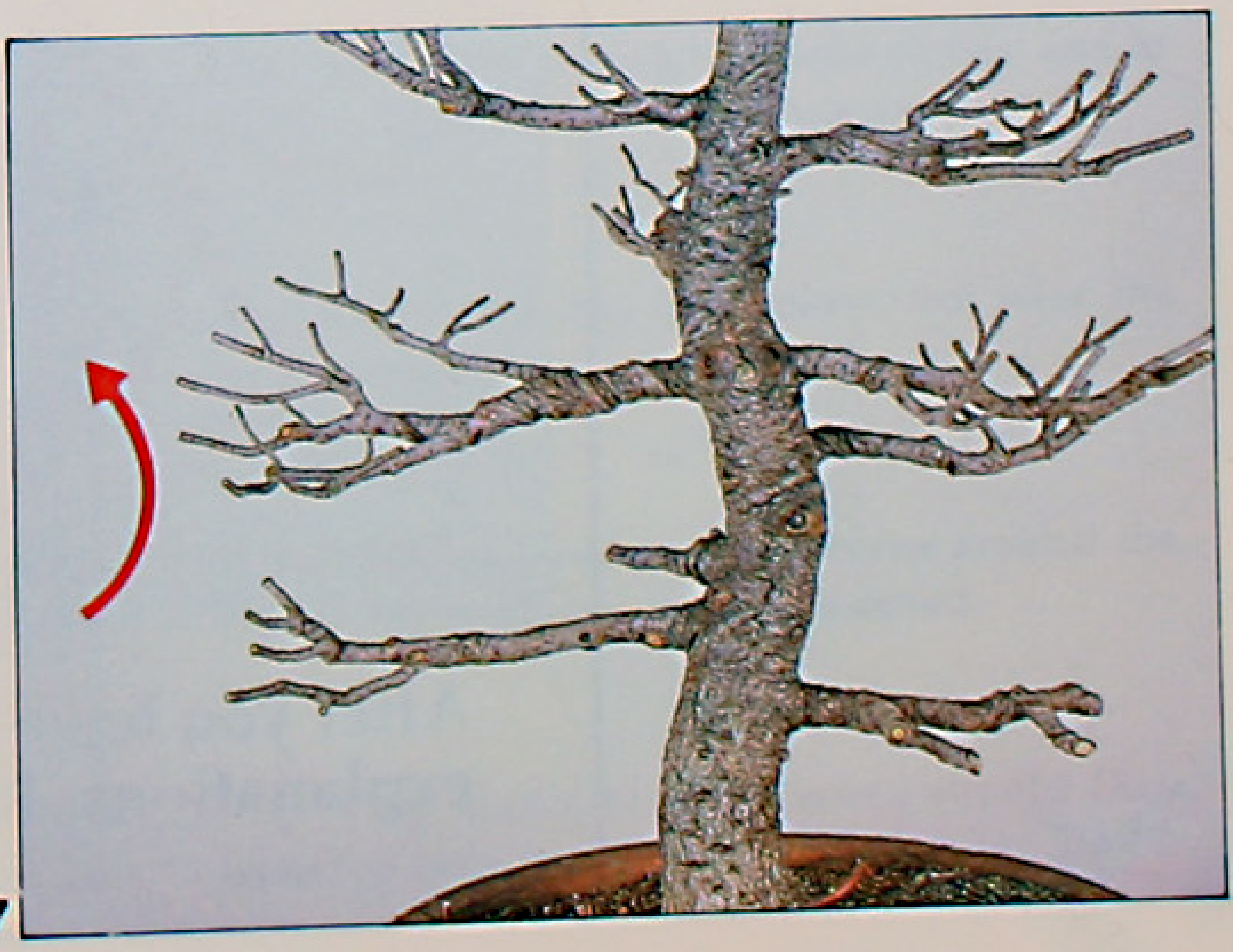

6

3 This illustration shows the CORRECT method.

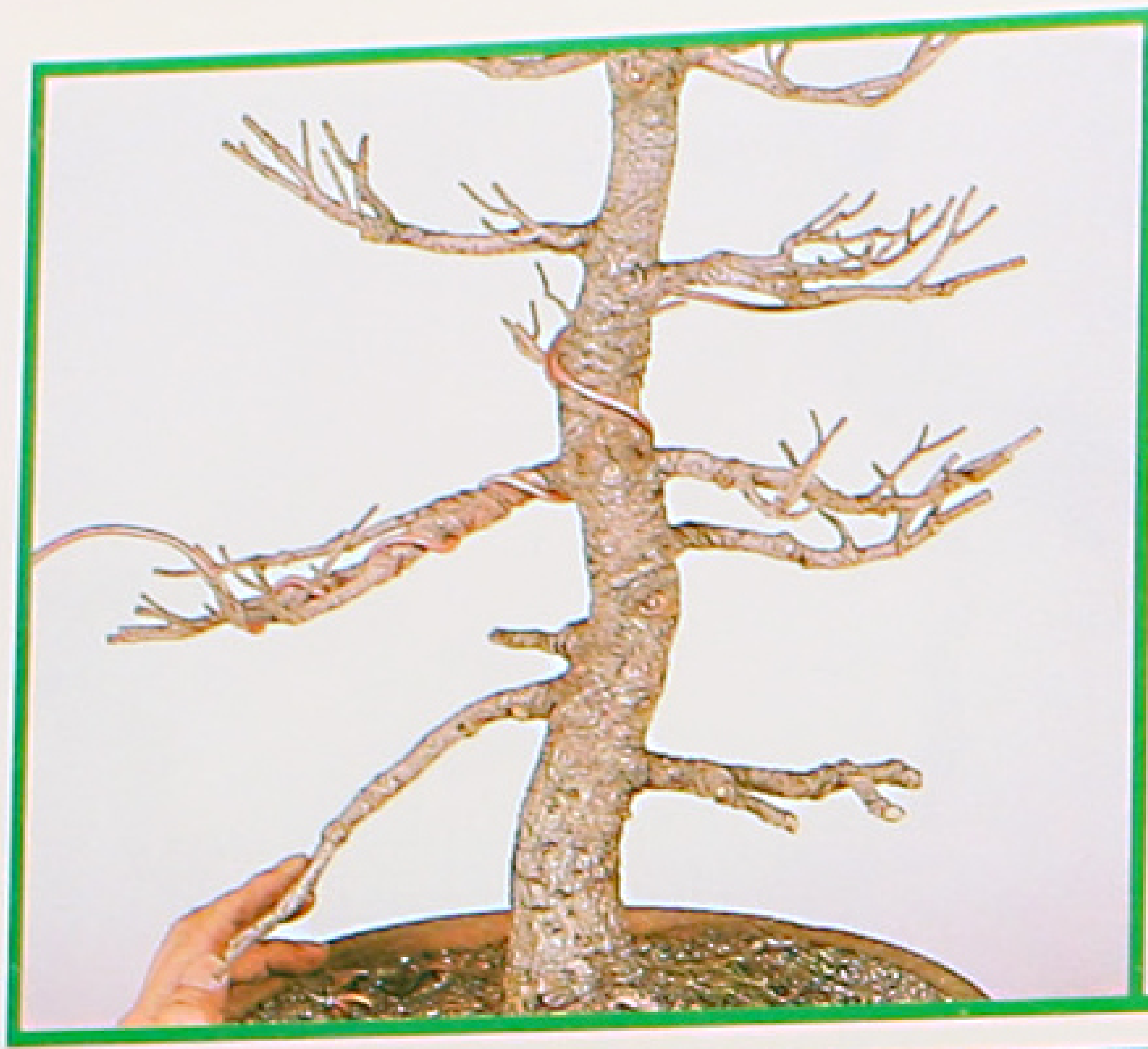
4 In the incorrect way, we were crossing a wire. Look again. Now compare illustrations 3 and 4 and carefully trace and compare the wiring and how the branches have been paired.

7 If we wish to twist a branch, the wire must follow the direction of the twist: if we turn towards the left, the wire must go towards the left.

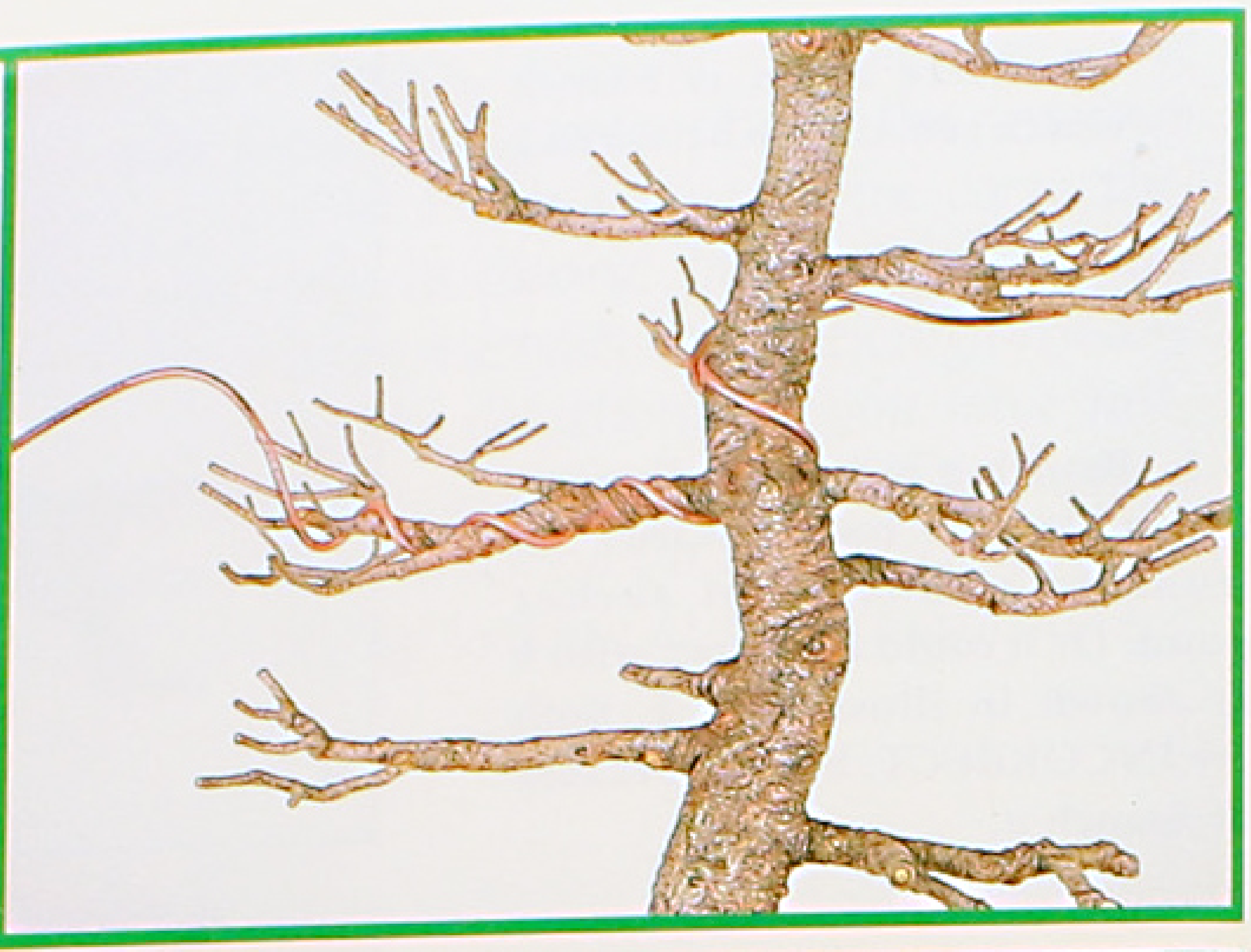

7

The wiring game

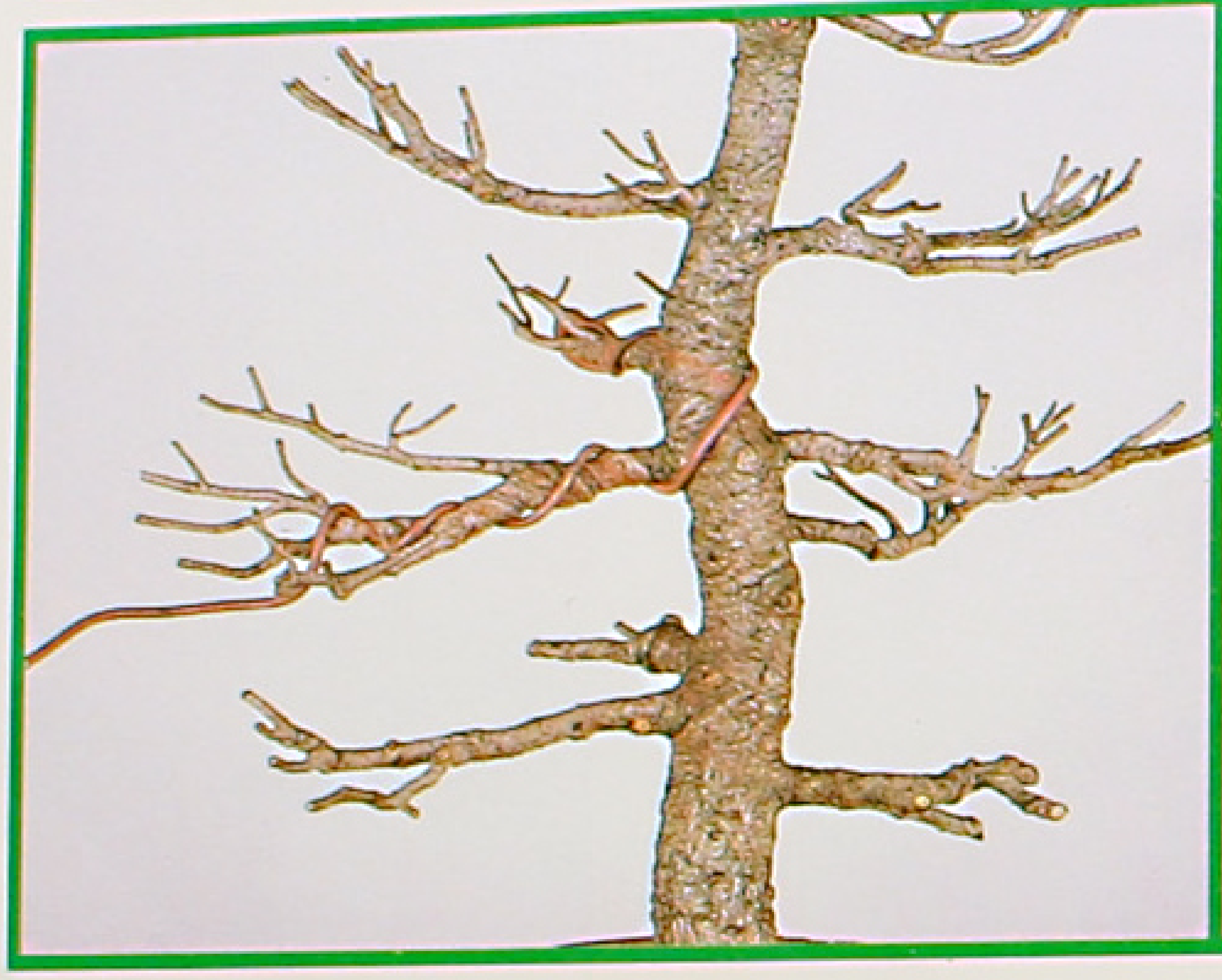
1 We coil the wire with a left hand spiral.



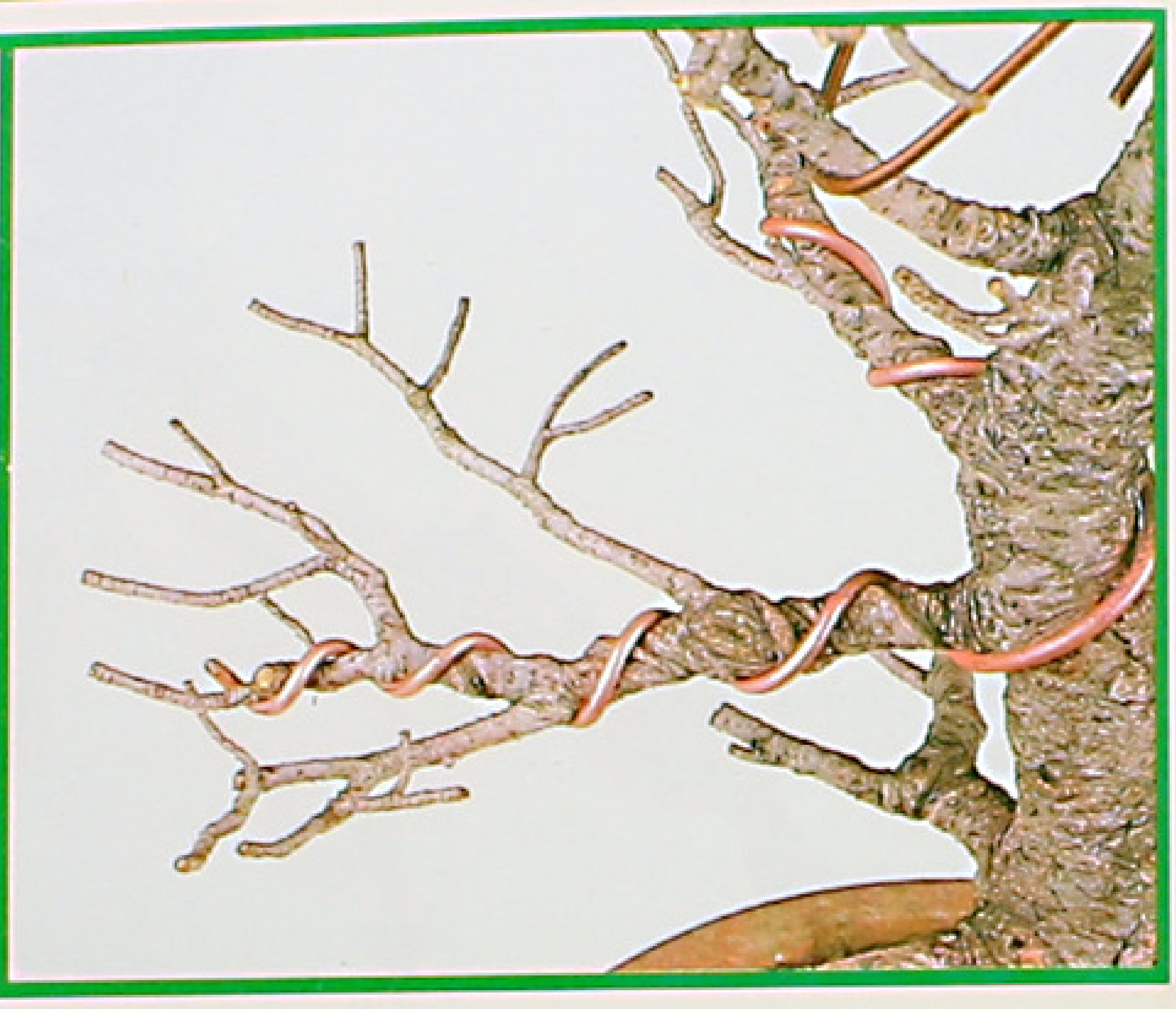
2 On twisting the branch to the left, the branch stays secured.



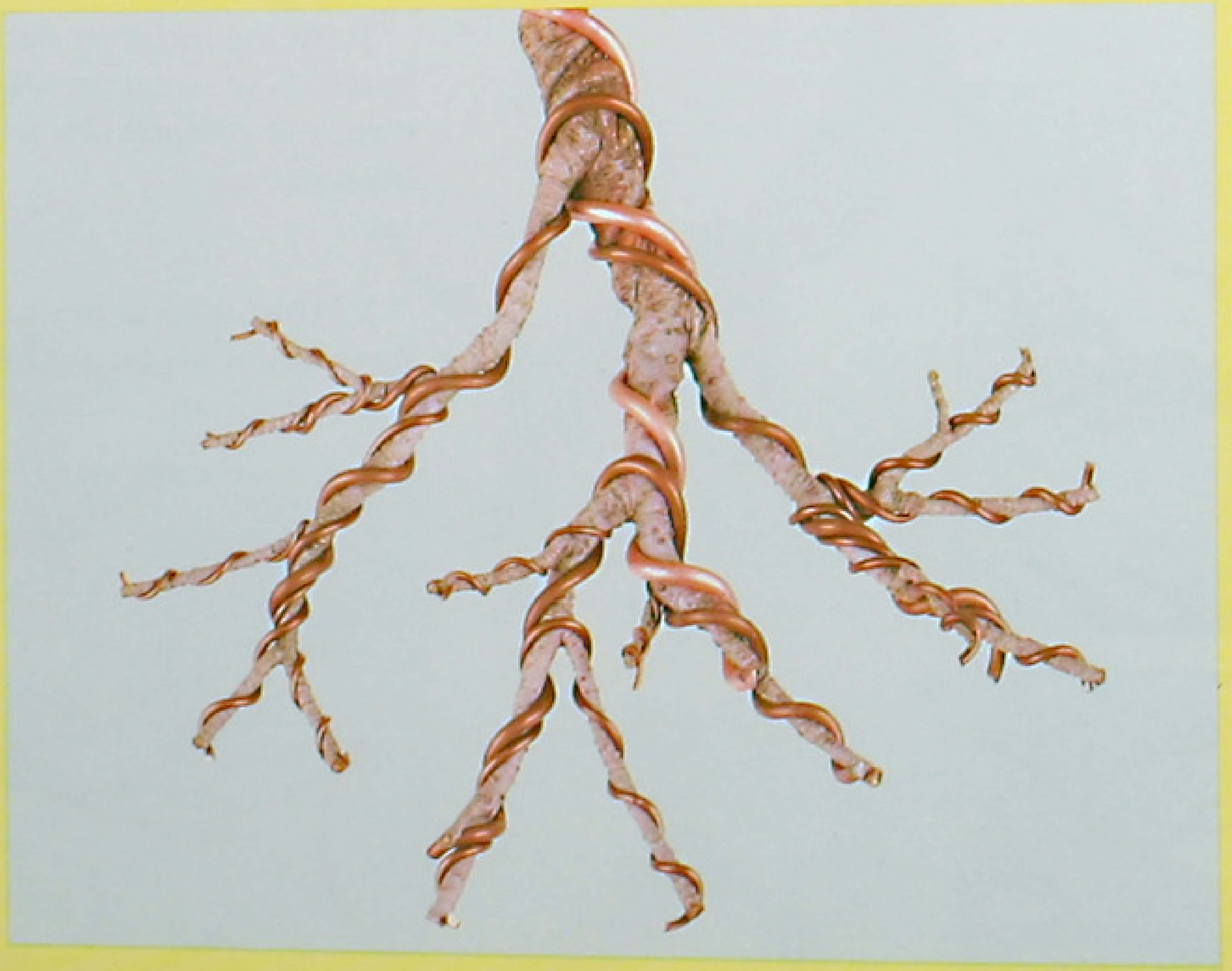
3 We coil the wire towards the right.



4 Now we can successfully twist the branch to the right.



How many wires are there?



After you have studied the photographs and explanations, it should be easy.

6 Wiring main branches

Up to this point, we have described the wiring of secondary branches. To wire main branches, the same procedure is followed; but here we emphasize the advisability of wiring the branches in pairs, selecting those branches which are sufficiently distant to allow at least one and one half turns of wire around the trunk or around the main branch. This avoids what is commonly known as the "teeter-totter" effect.

Wiring the main branches in pairs has several advantages: the wire around the trunk serves to secure both branches; it often avoids the need to cross wires; and it uses less wire.

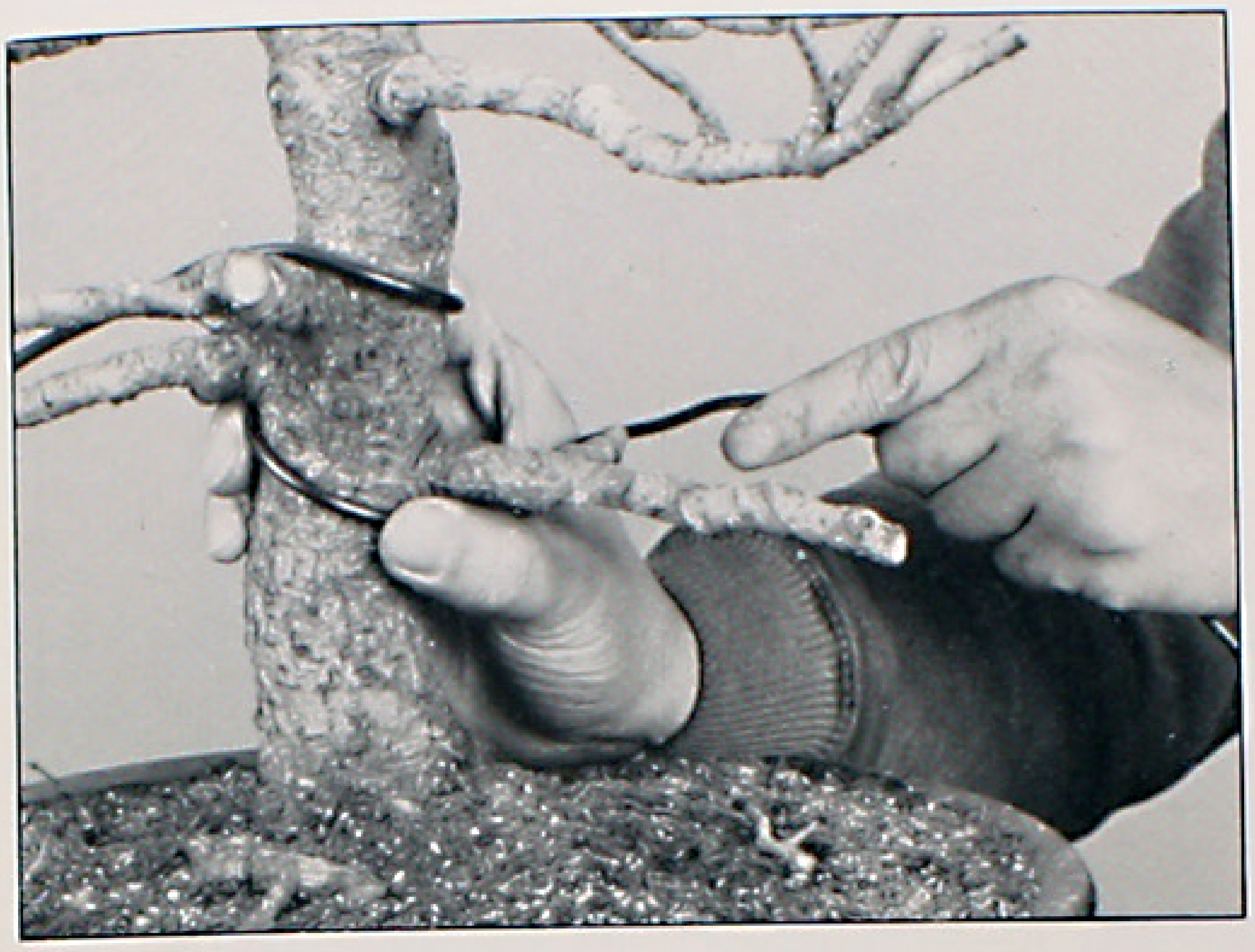
The photographs that illustrate this section indicate in detail the way in which the wire should be applied to branch pairs and how it should be secured at the main branch or trunk. The different methods for applying wire to lower or raise branches is also shown.

Some final recommendations:

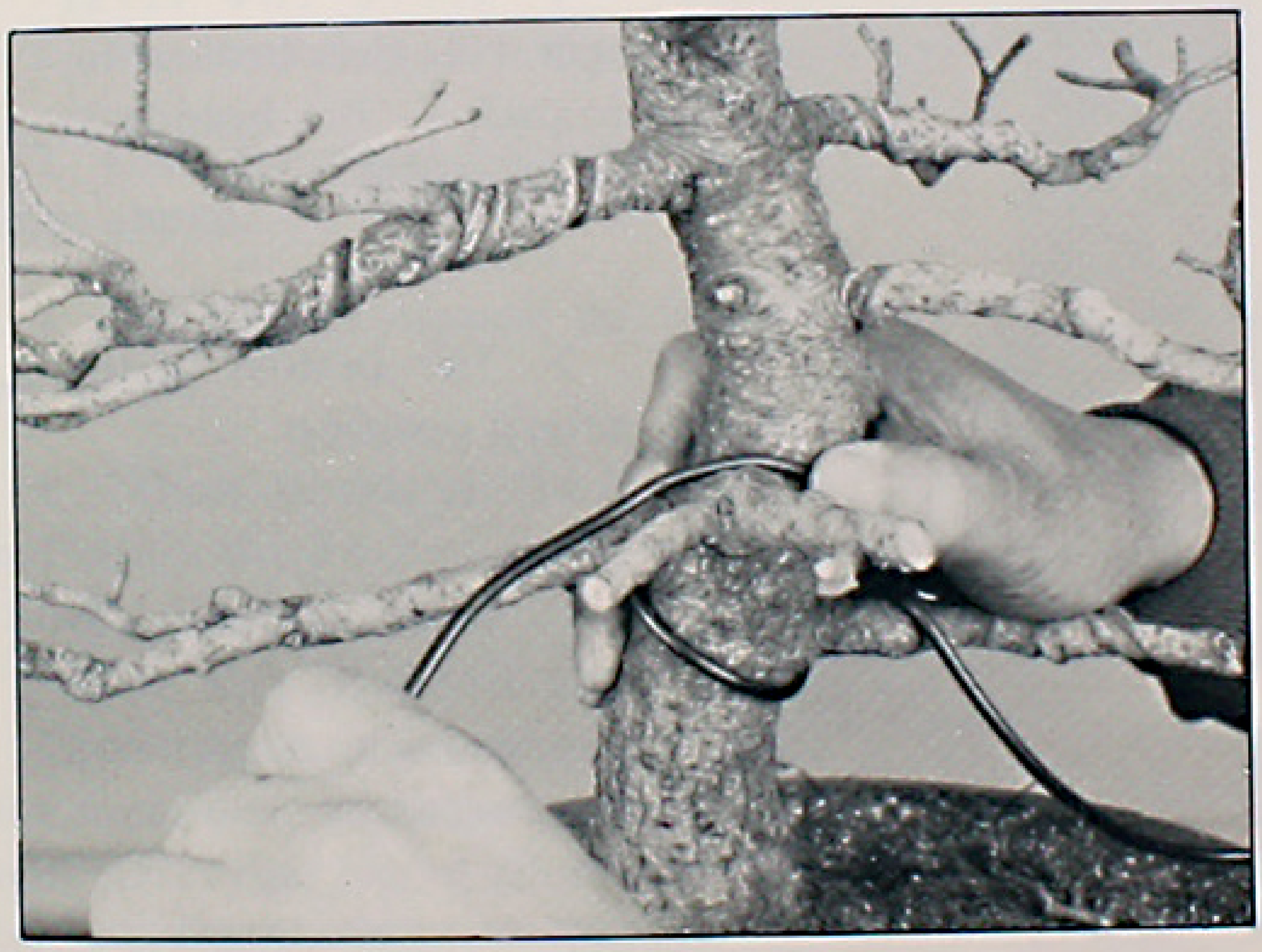
— If you are right handed, you may feel more comfortable wiring branches on the right side of the tree. Just rotate the tree 180° to do the left side branches. You may find that it may be easier with the branch facing you.

— Bend the wire; not the branch.

— Decide on the branch position before you act; avoid bending it back and forth.



1



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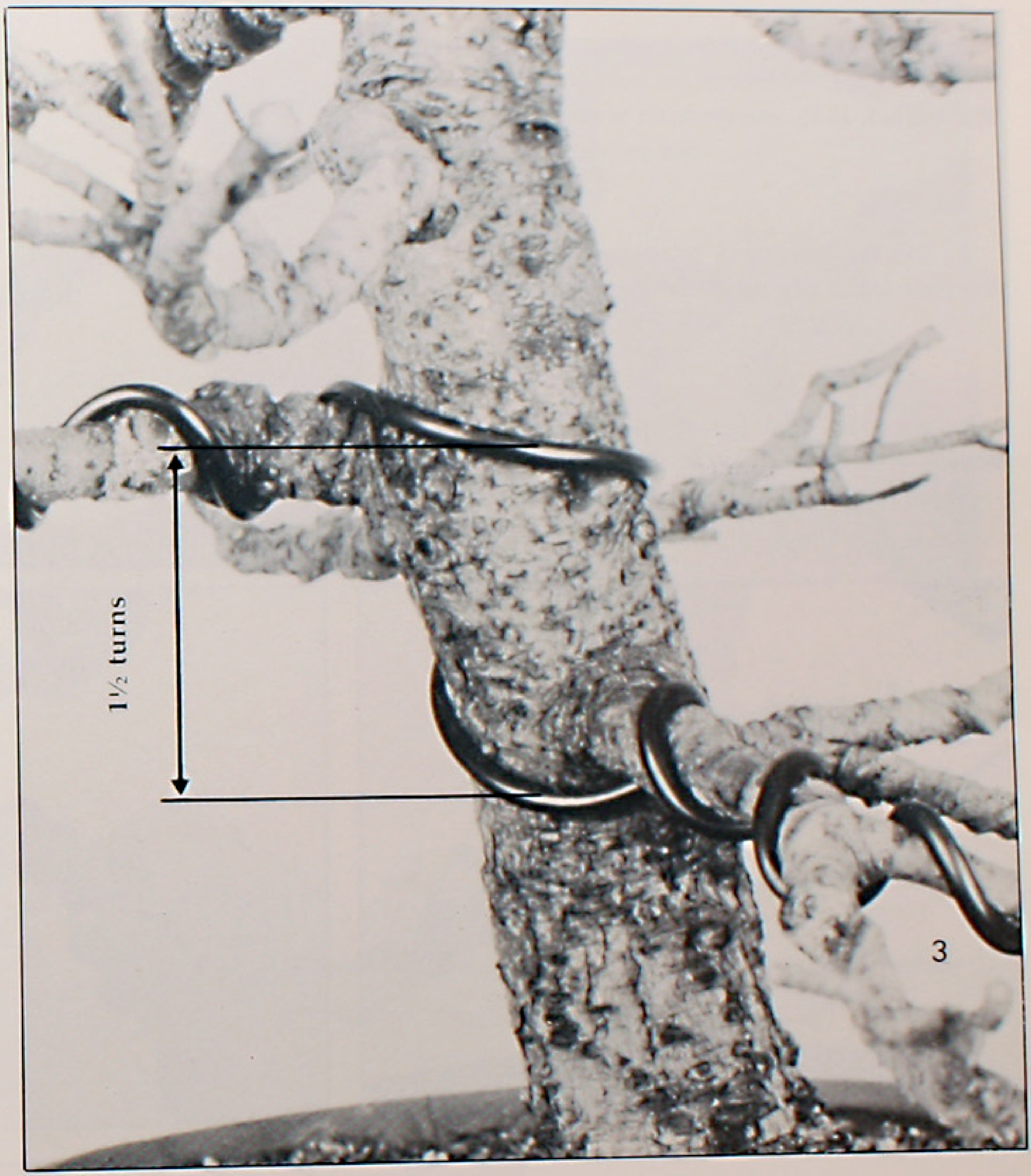

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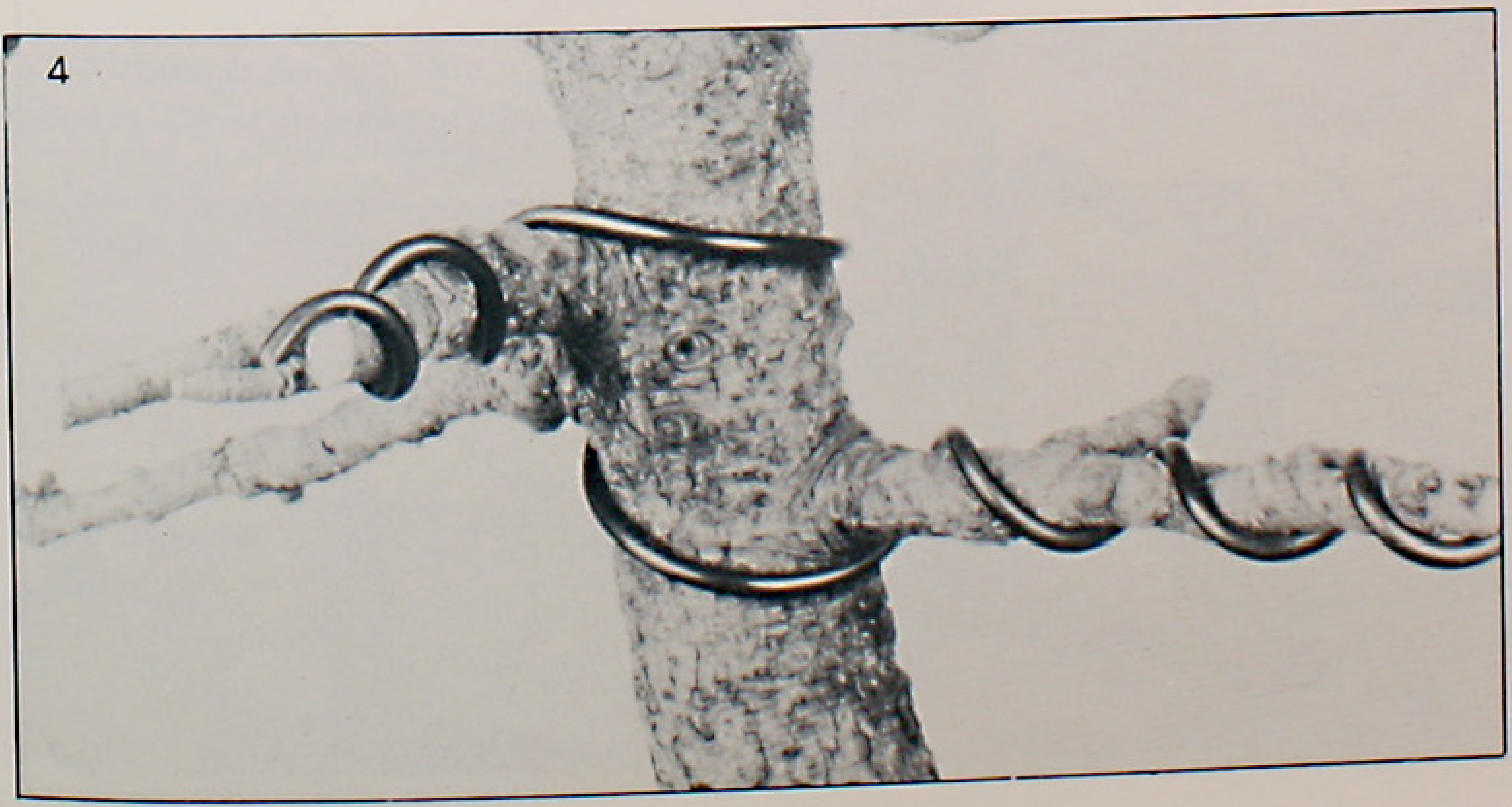


4

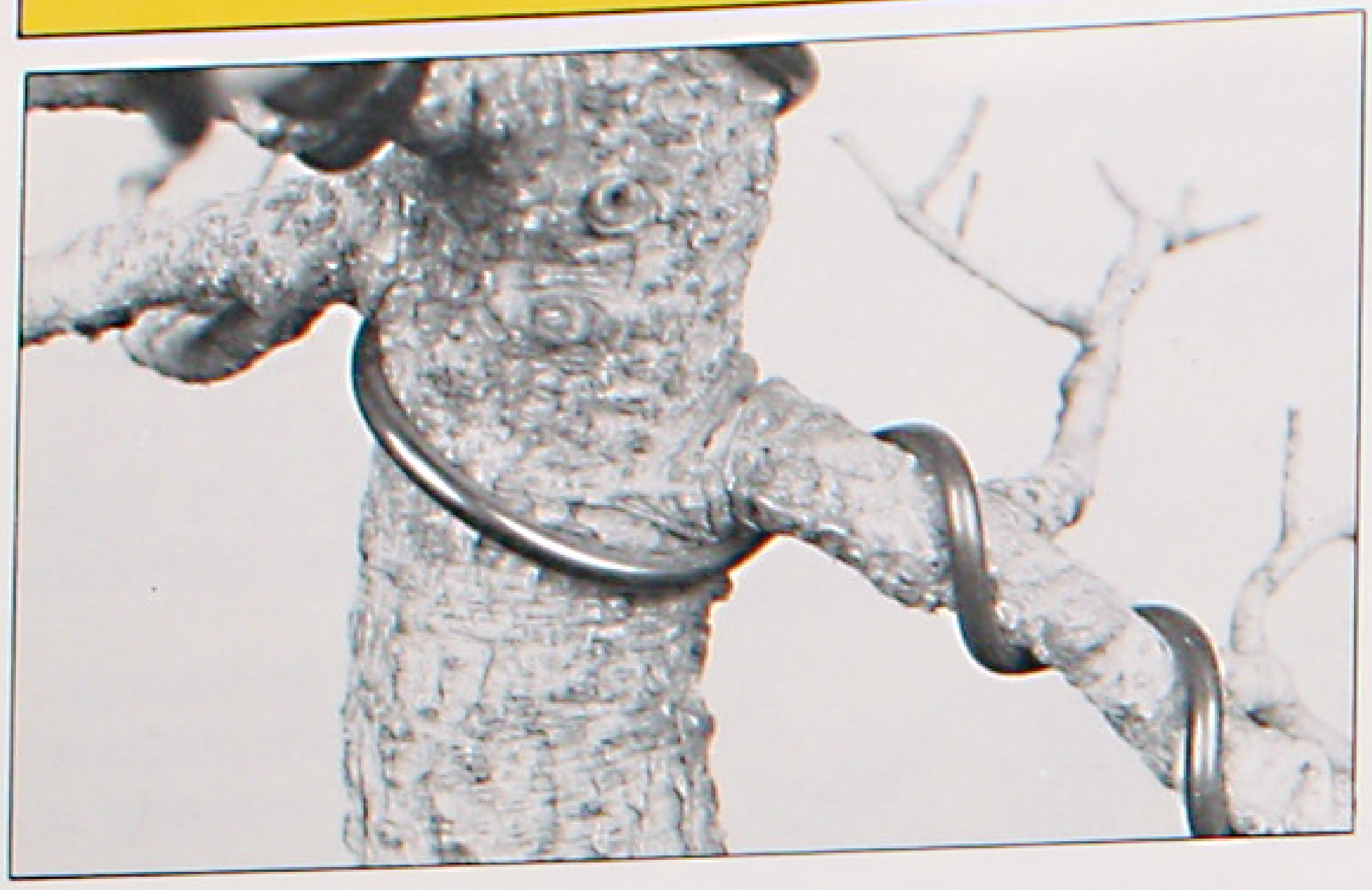
1 We begin wiring by winding one end of the wire around the lower branch.

2 Once that has been done, we wire the upper branch.

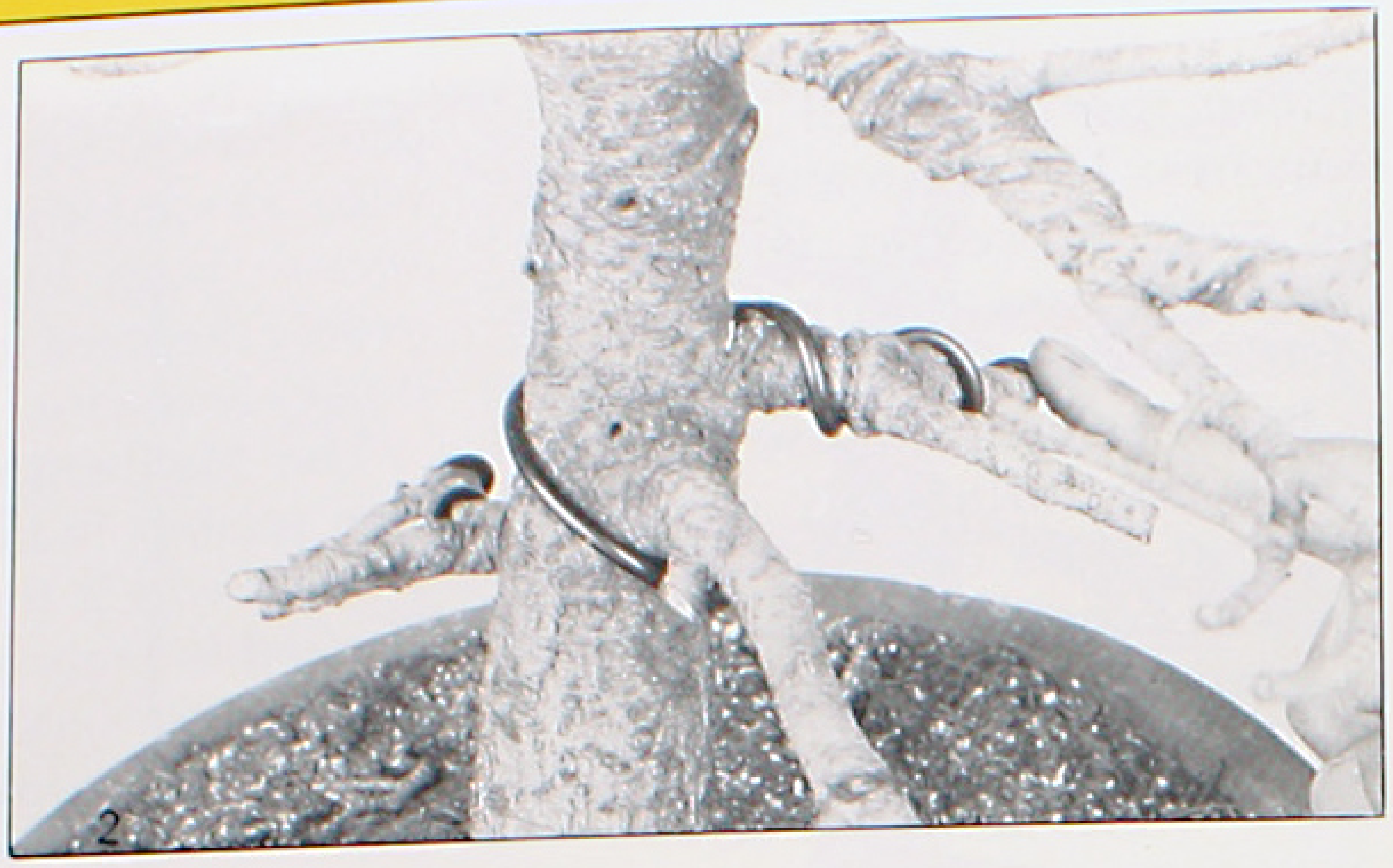
3 With one and one half turns around the trunk, the branches will be secured.

4 This shows how the wires should flow onto the branches.

Wiring main branches



1

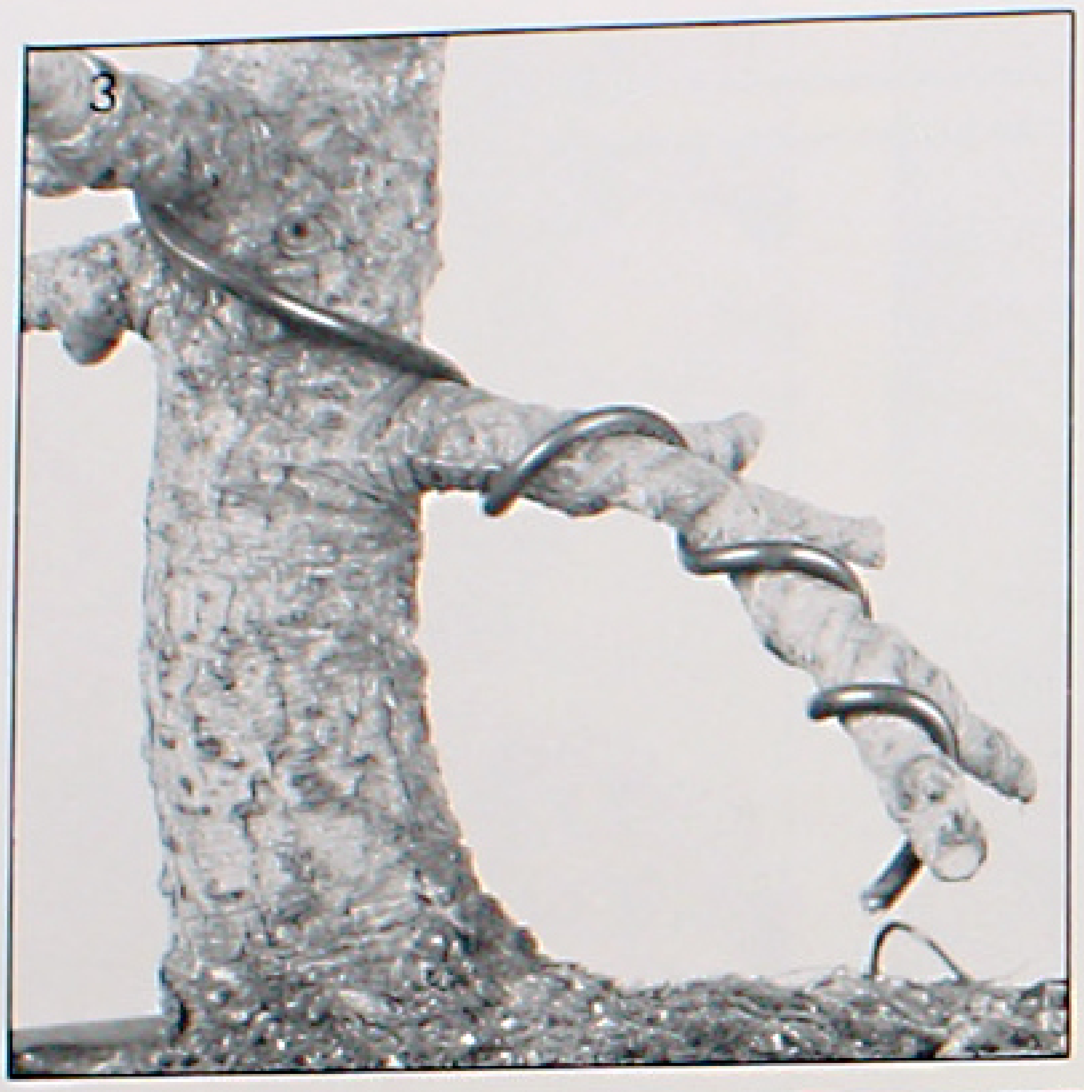


2

1 When raising branches, the first spiral should begin below the branch at its intersection with the trunk.

2 When lowering branches, the first spiral begins on the top of the branch.

3 Again, the first spiral begins above the branch; the intention is to lower the branch.



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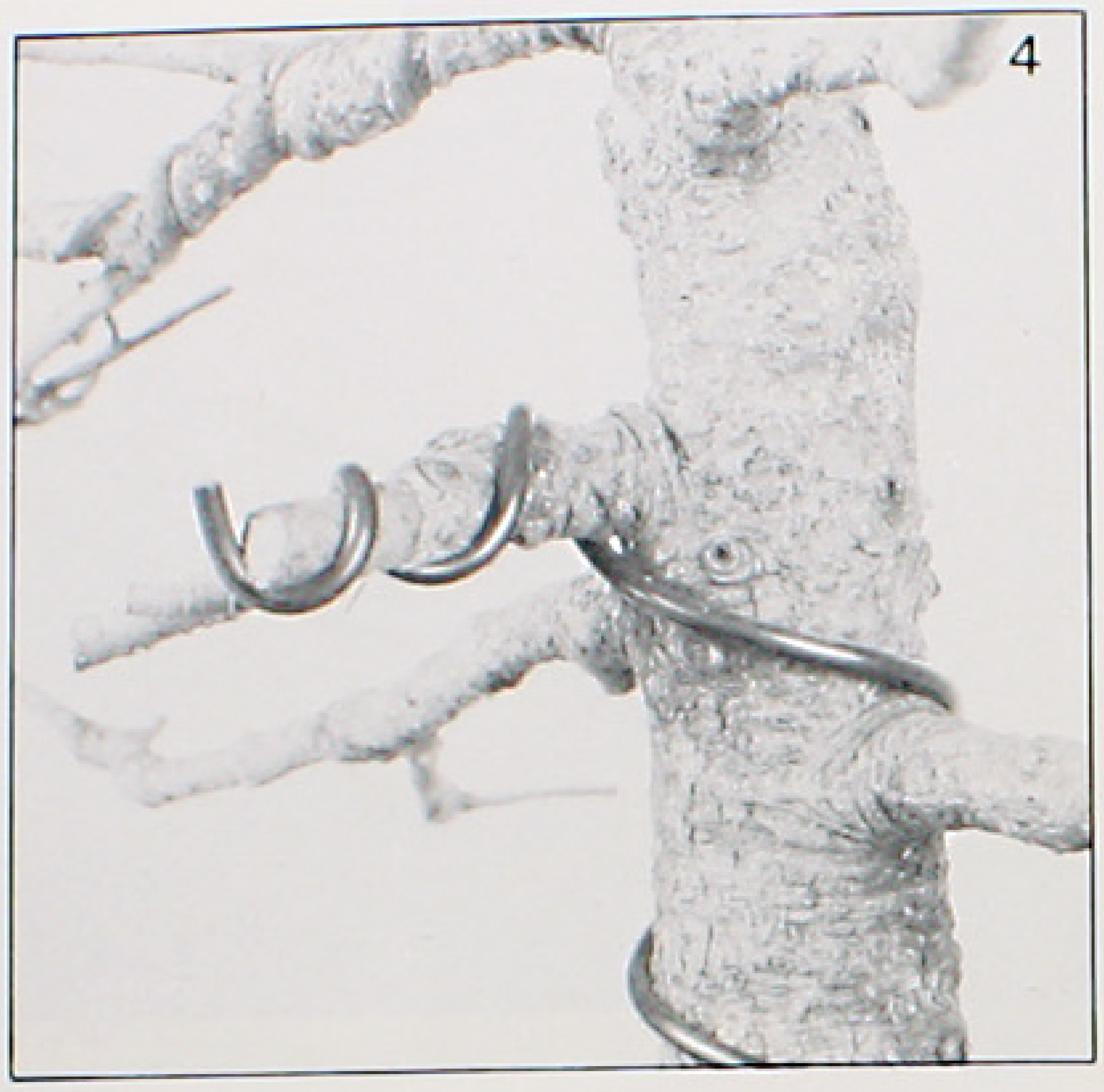

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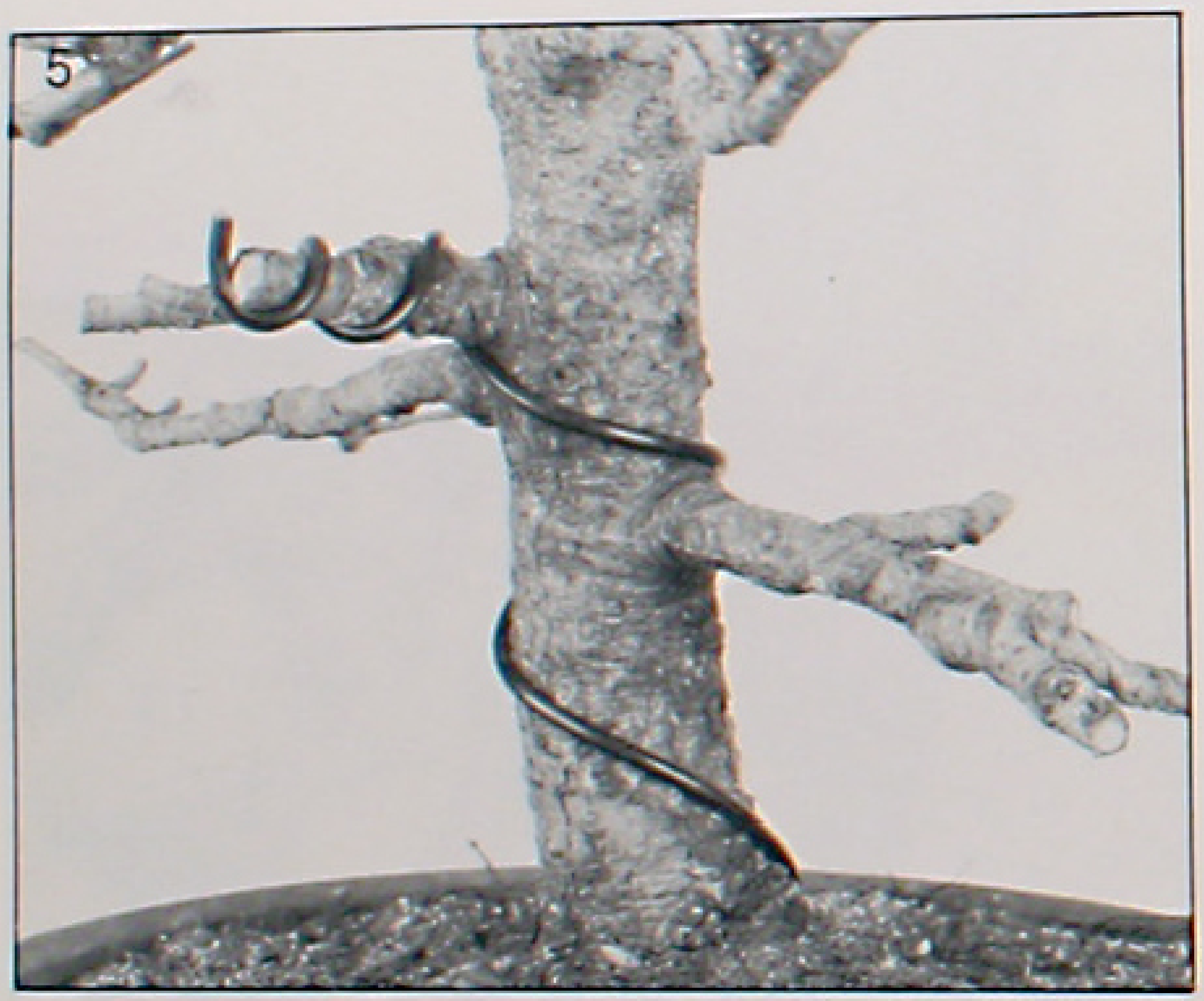

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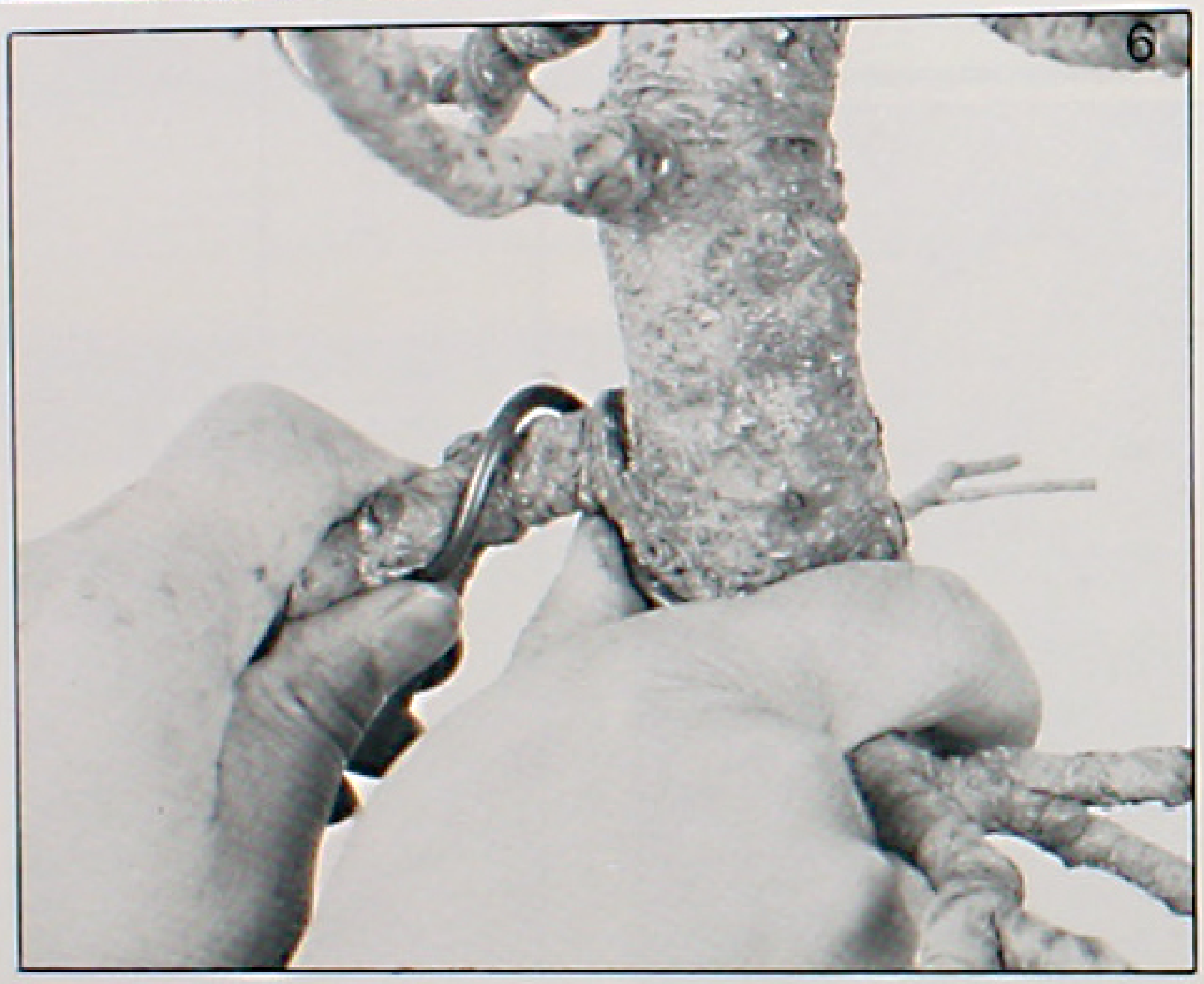


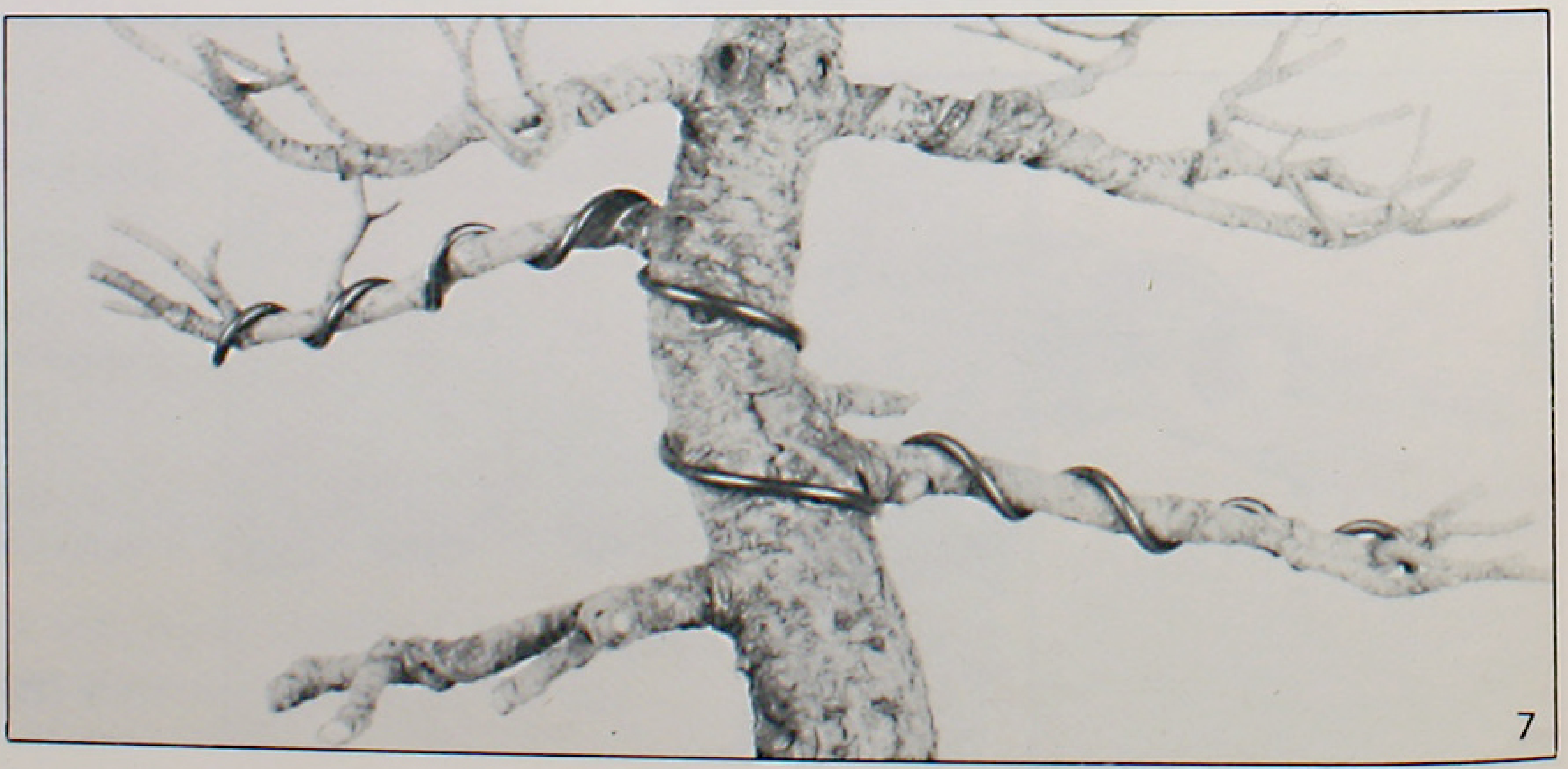
6

4 Here the first spiral begins below the branch so the branch is to be raised.

5 The branch in the raised position.

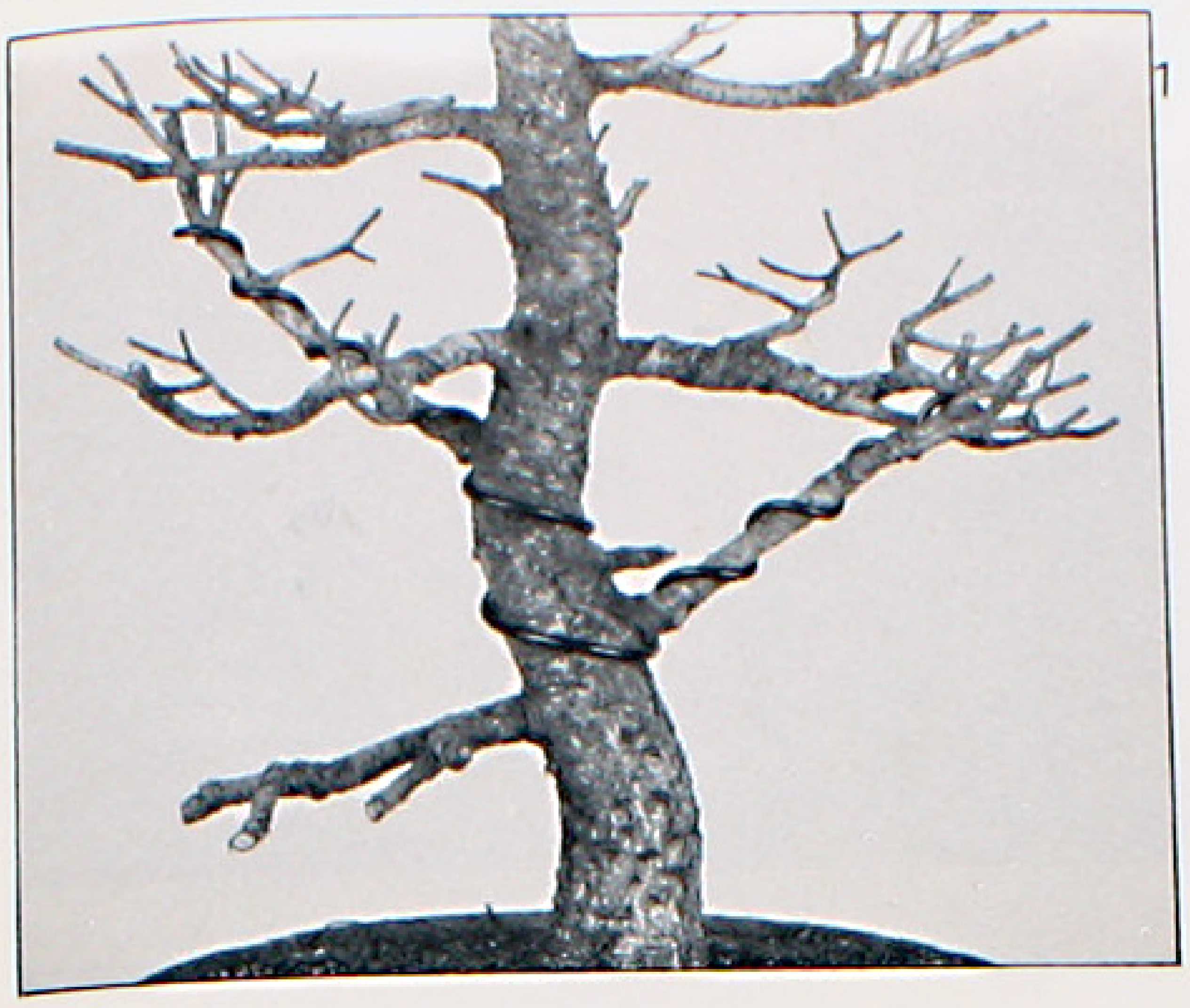
6 If we were to lower the branch, the wire separates and splitting may occur.

7 Both branches are properly wired for being raised.



7

Wiring main branches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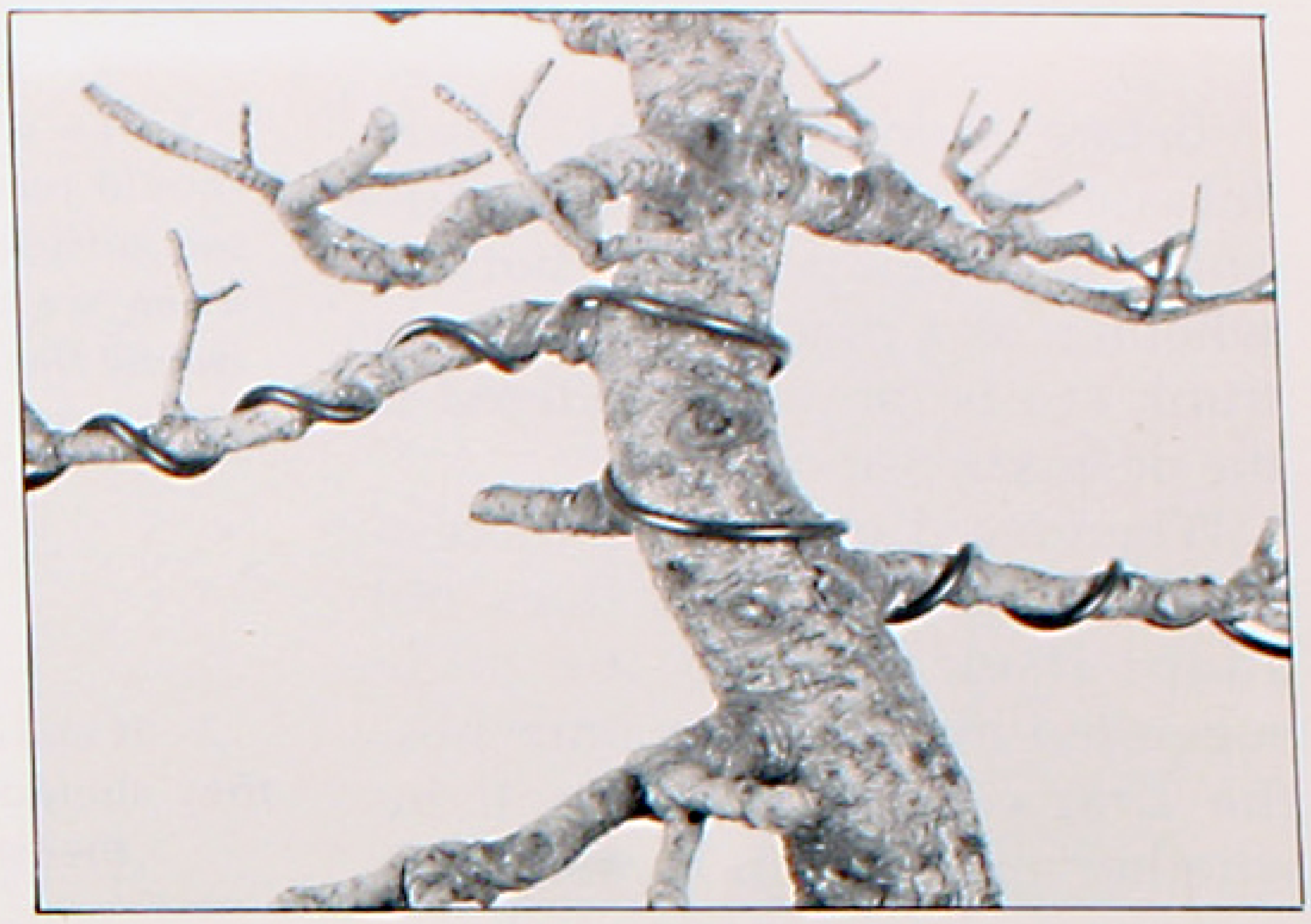
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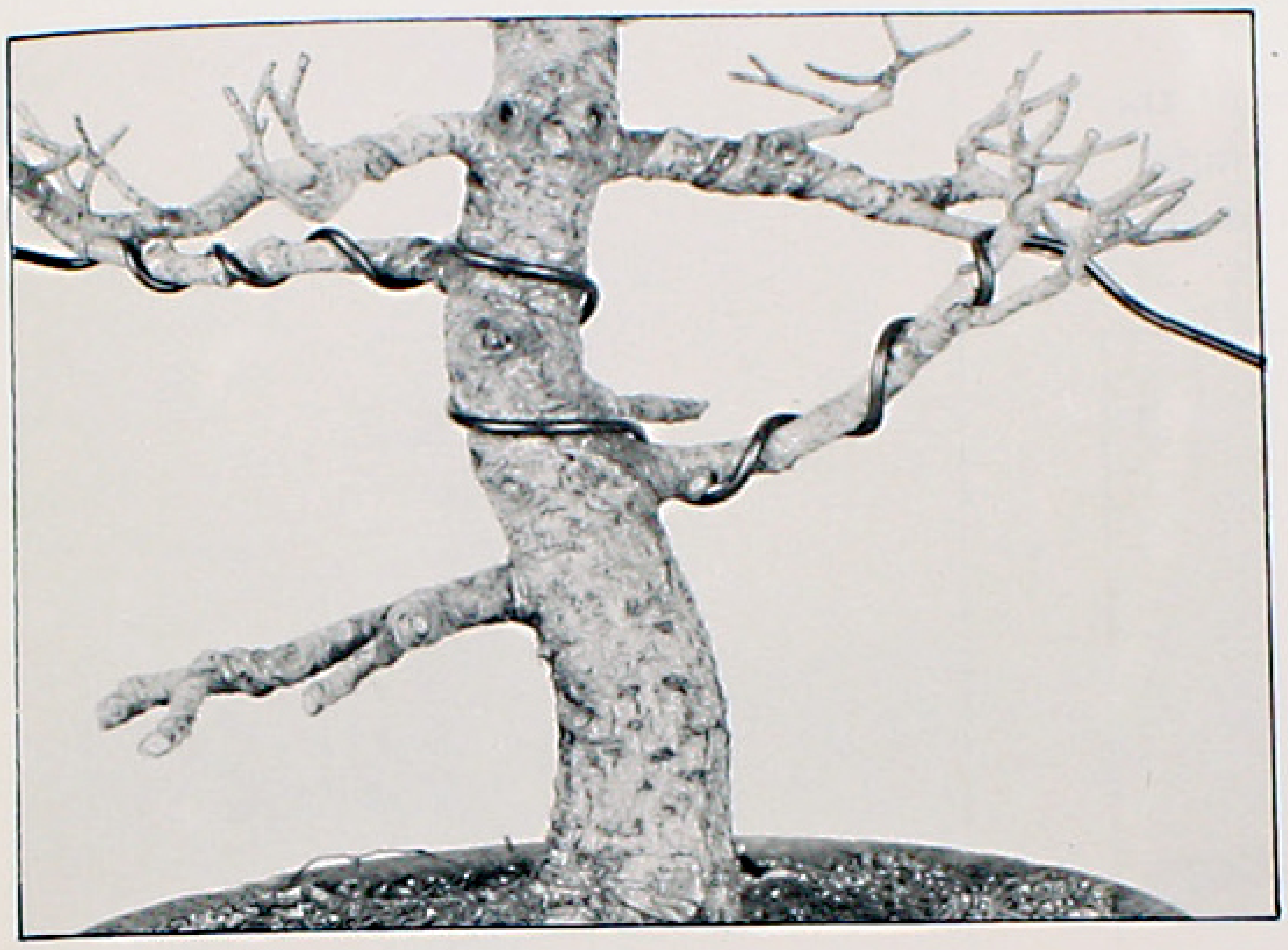
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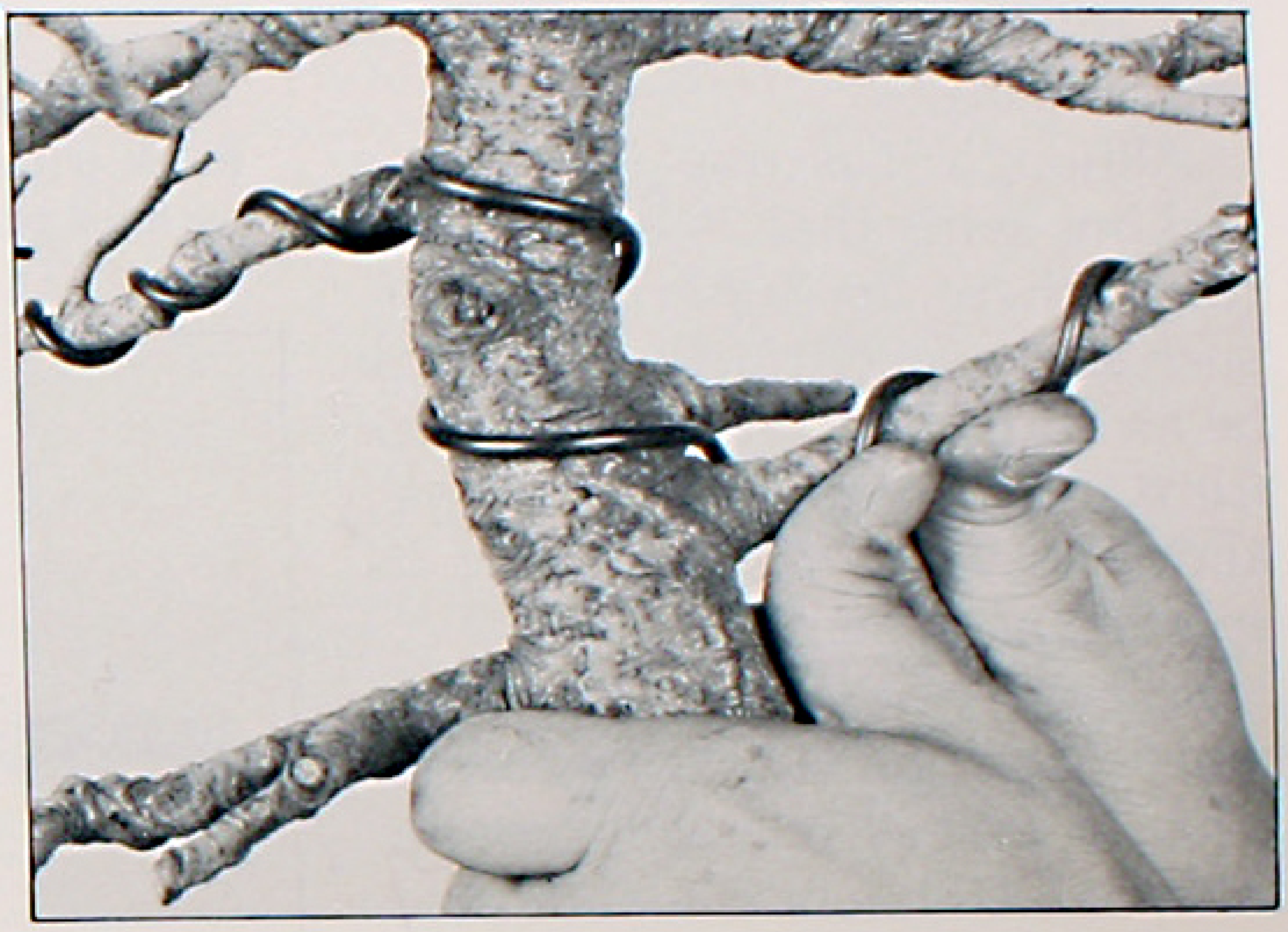

3

1 The branches stay in position perfectly.

2 Let's see what happens if we wire the branches from above.

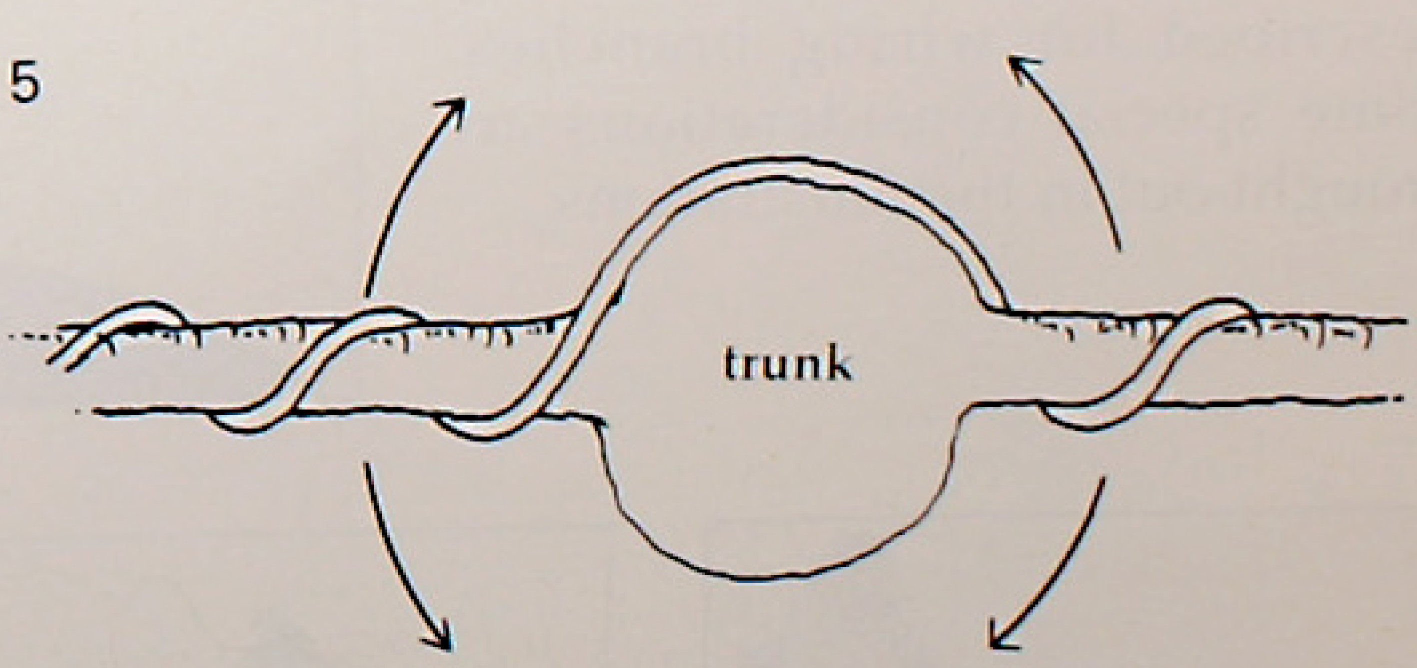
3 The fingers support the branch in the position that we desire.

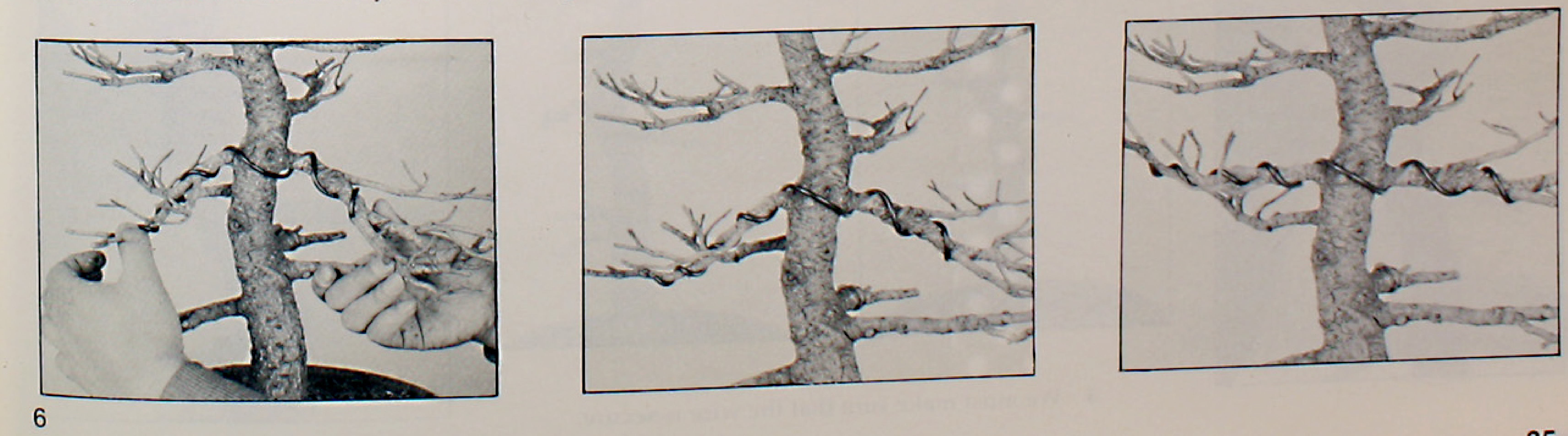
4 When we release the branch, we find that we can not retain the desired angle at the intersection with the trunk.

5 We must never wire two opposite branches with the same wire as shown, because the movement of one will affect that of the other. This is known as the "tetter totter" effect.

6 Although we are only trying to raise or lower the branches, these will never stay in the desired position.

5




6

7

Wiring the trunk

Before wiring the trunk, a careful assessment must be made of not only the design potential, but also whether, as a practical matter, the trunk can be physically altered to the desired position.

When faced with an uninteresting trunk, or one that does not adapt itself well to the style suggested by the major branches, the first consideration will be whether or not it is possible to improve the line of the trunk. If it is too thick, even the largest wire may not do.

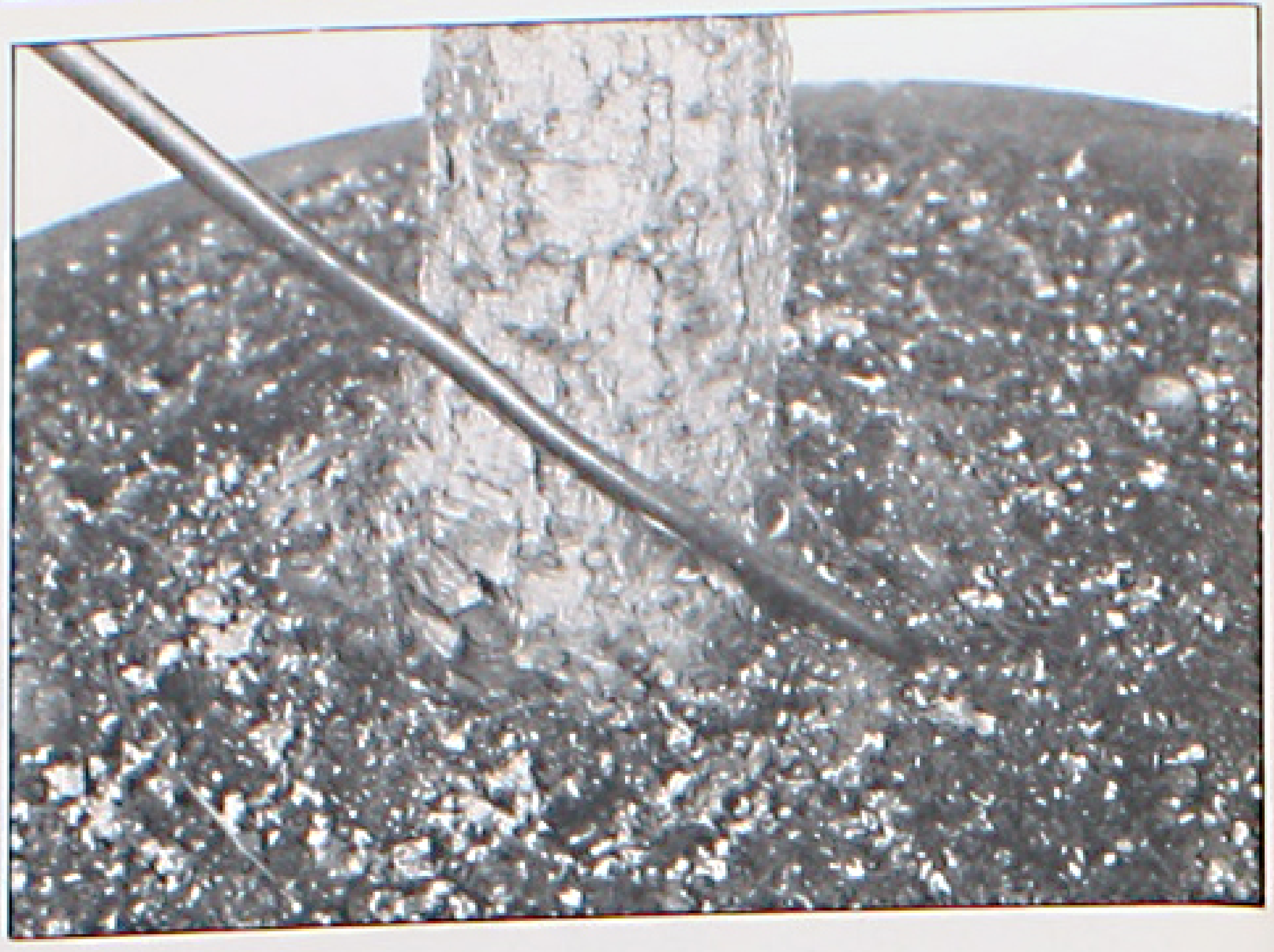
Although it is true that, when lacking wire that is sufficiently thick, there are other solutions, such as the special jacks, there may be an additional problem. A thick trunk usually implies an older tree, and, therefore, the danger of its splitting is greater.

Because of all this, it is good practice to begin to shape the trunk when a tree is relatively young, when it is still slender and flexible. We must envision the form the tree will take in future years.

Generally, trunk wiring techniques and procedures are the same as those we have already described for wiring branches. Some special considerations are brought out in the illustrations.

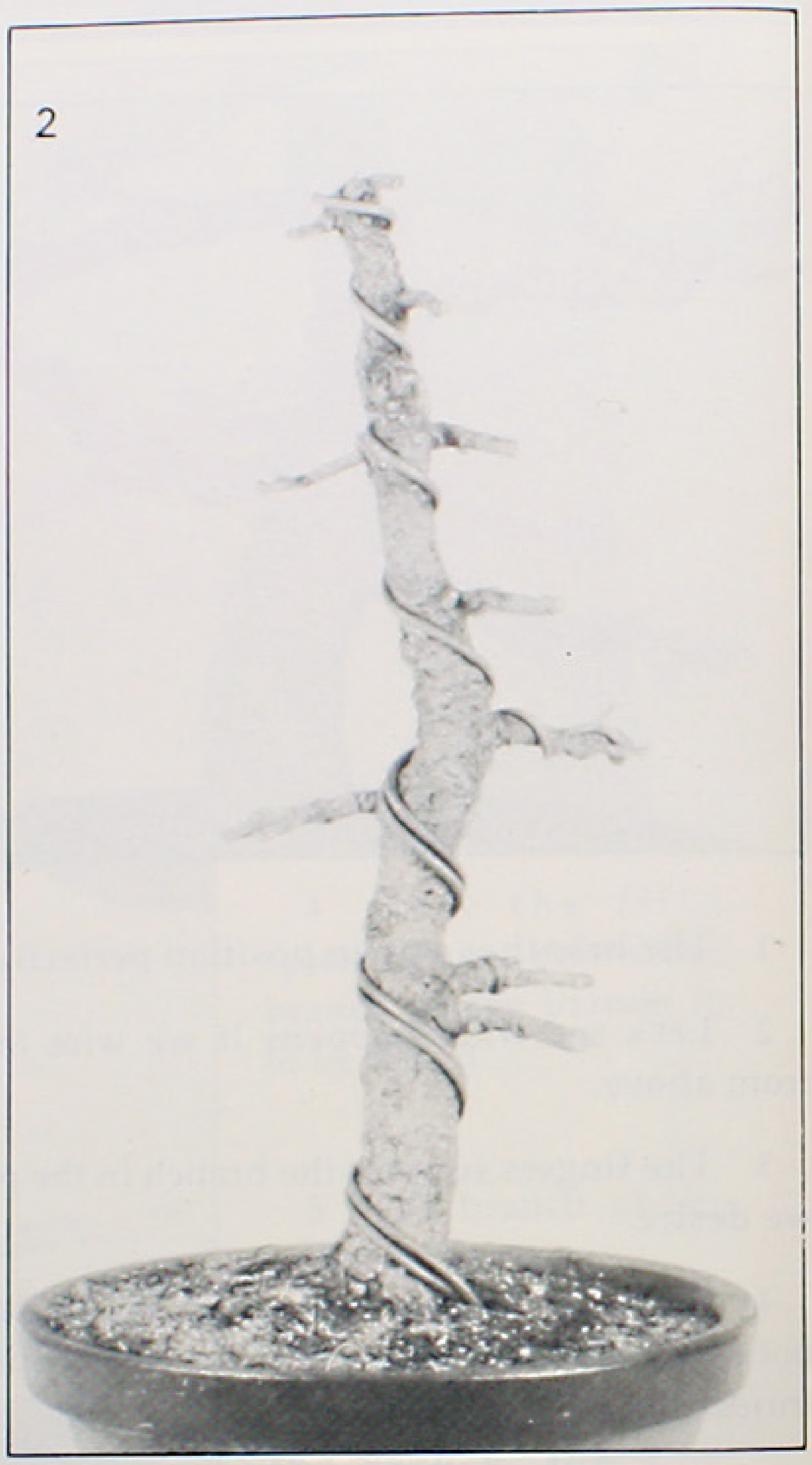
1 To wire the trunk, we should push the wire into the soil sufficiently deeply so that when we make the first coil around the trunk the wire does not move and damage the roots.

1



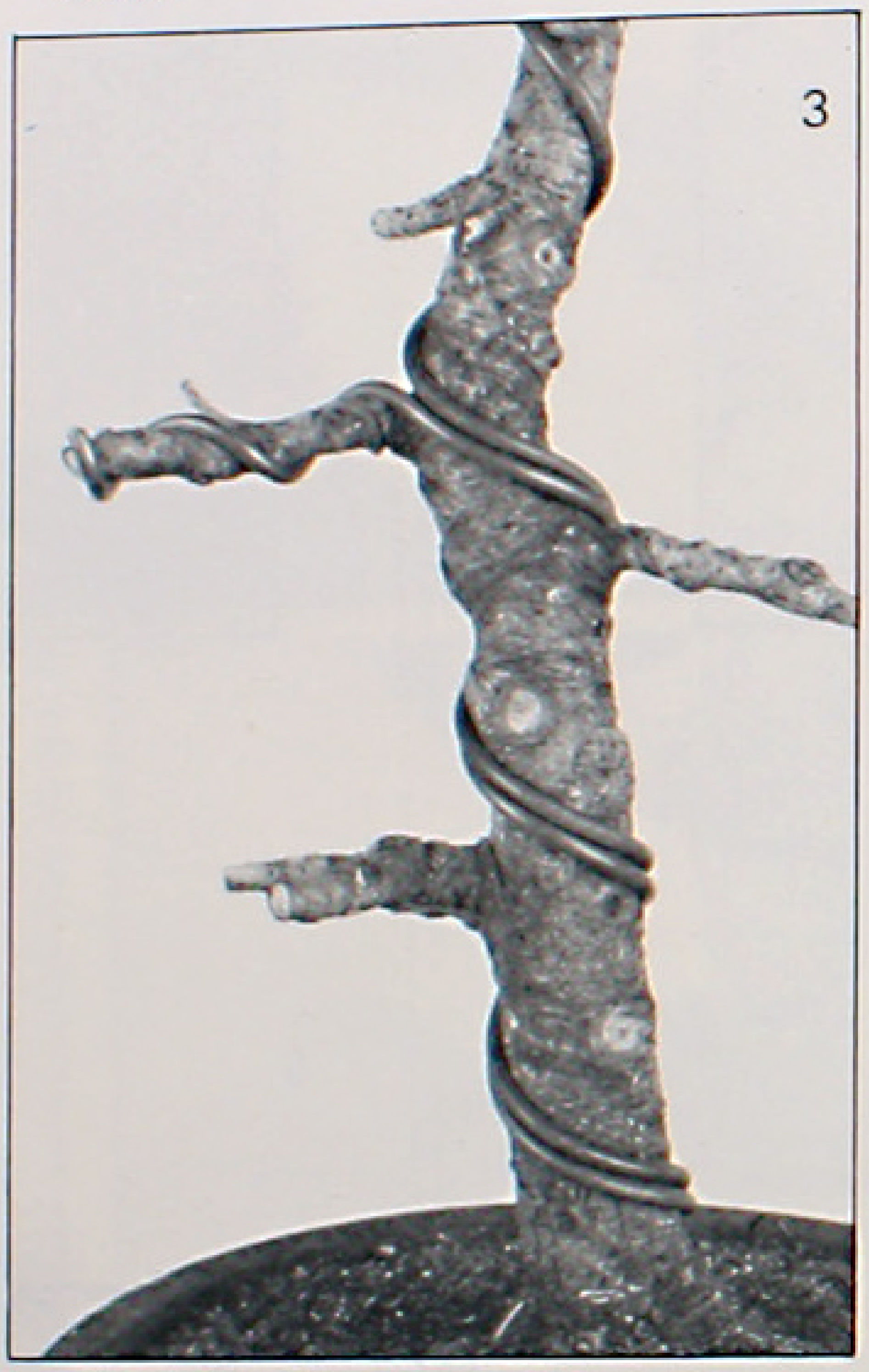
2 If more wires are needed, they should be applied using the first wire as a guide.

2



3 If we wish to use one of the trunk wires to wire a main branch, we must plan ahead to avoid crossing wires.

3



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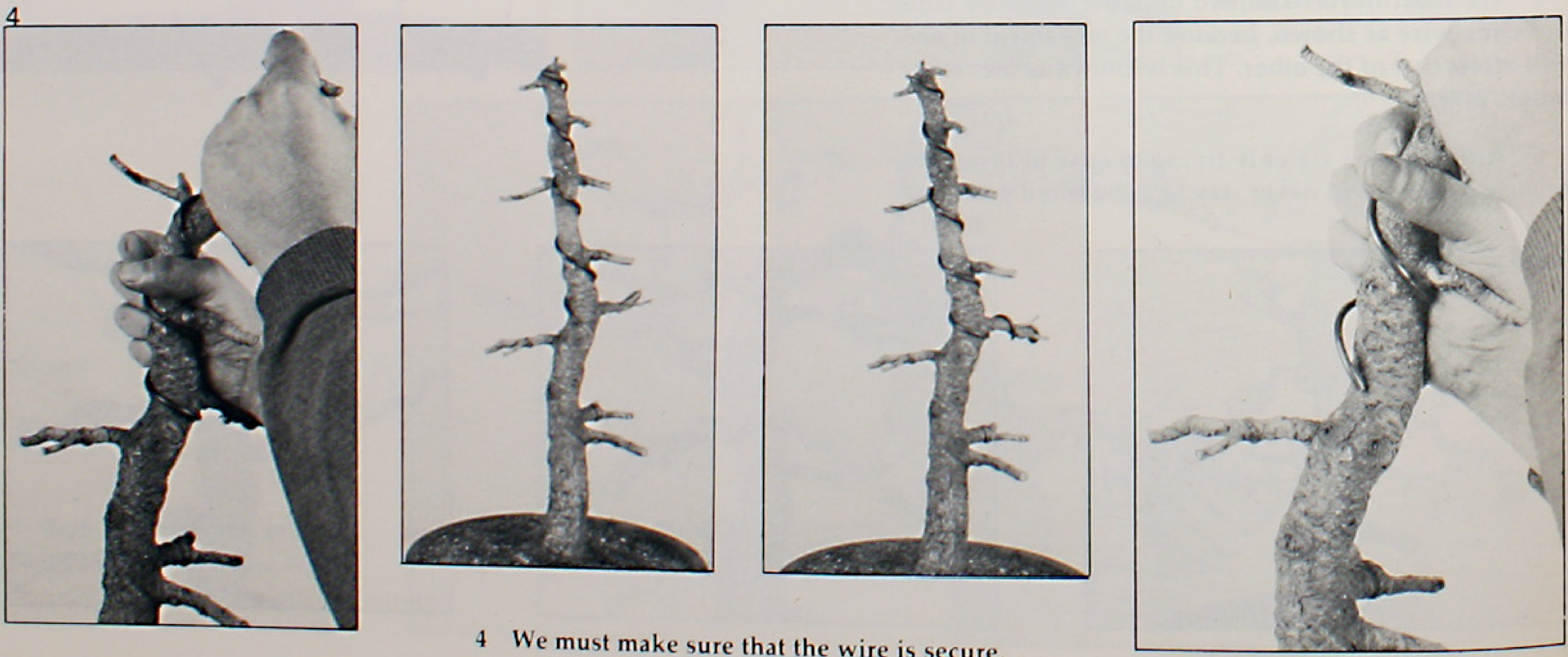
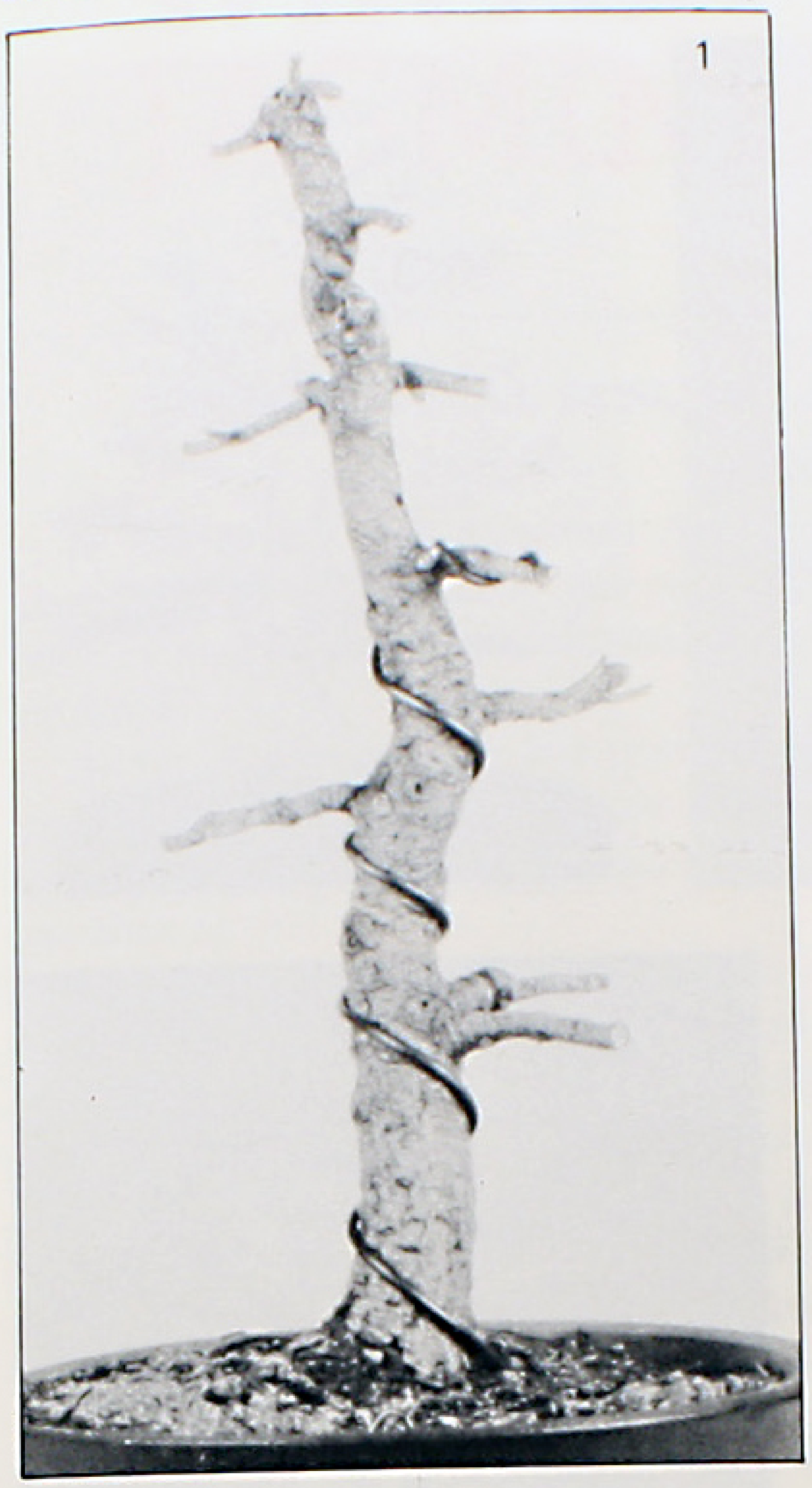
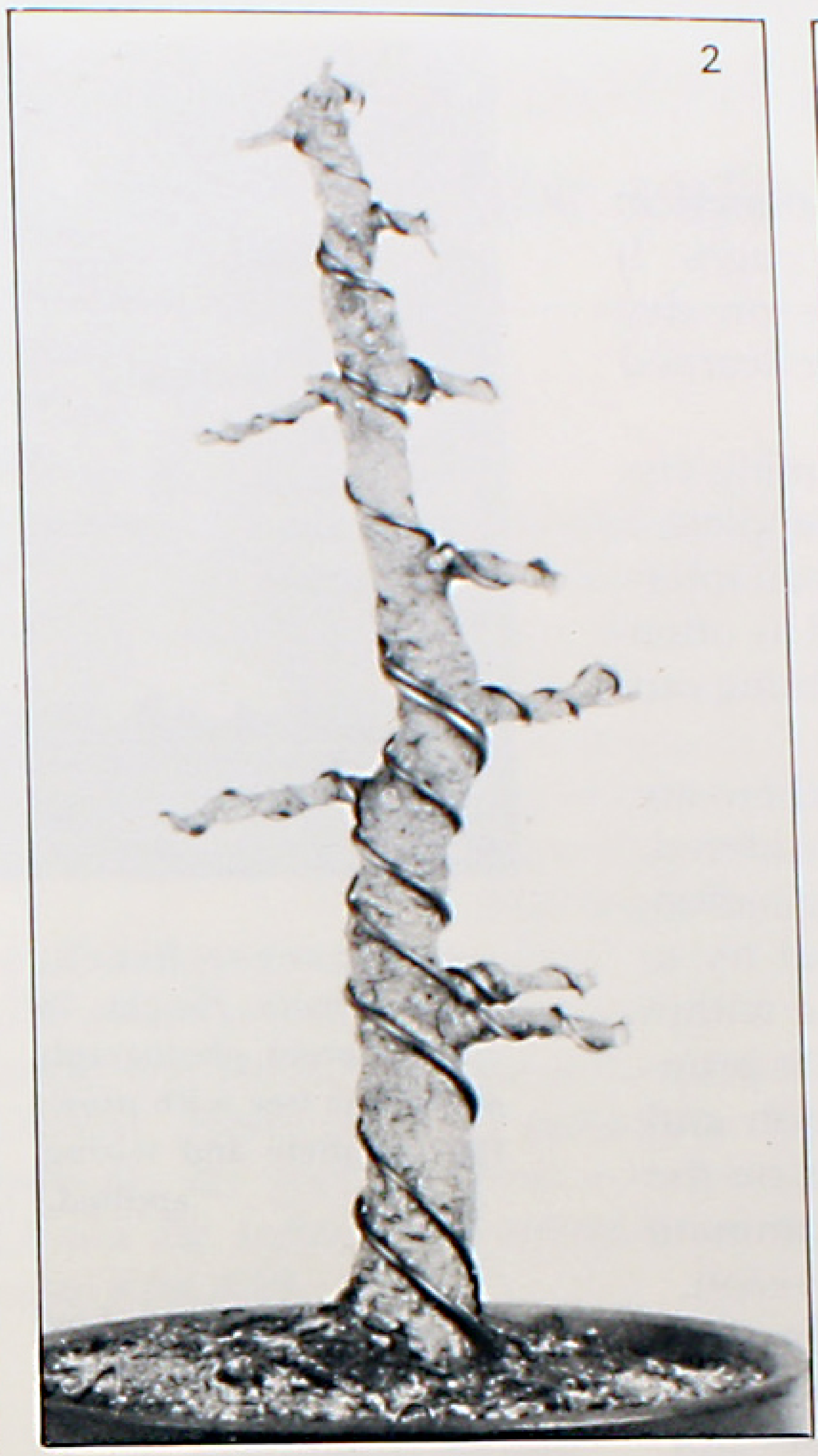


4 We must make sure that the wire is secure.

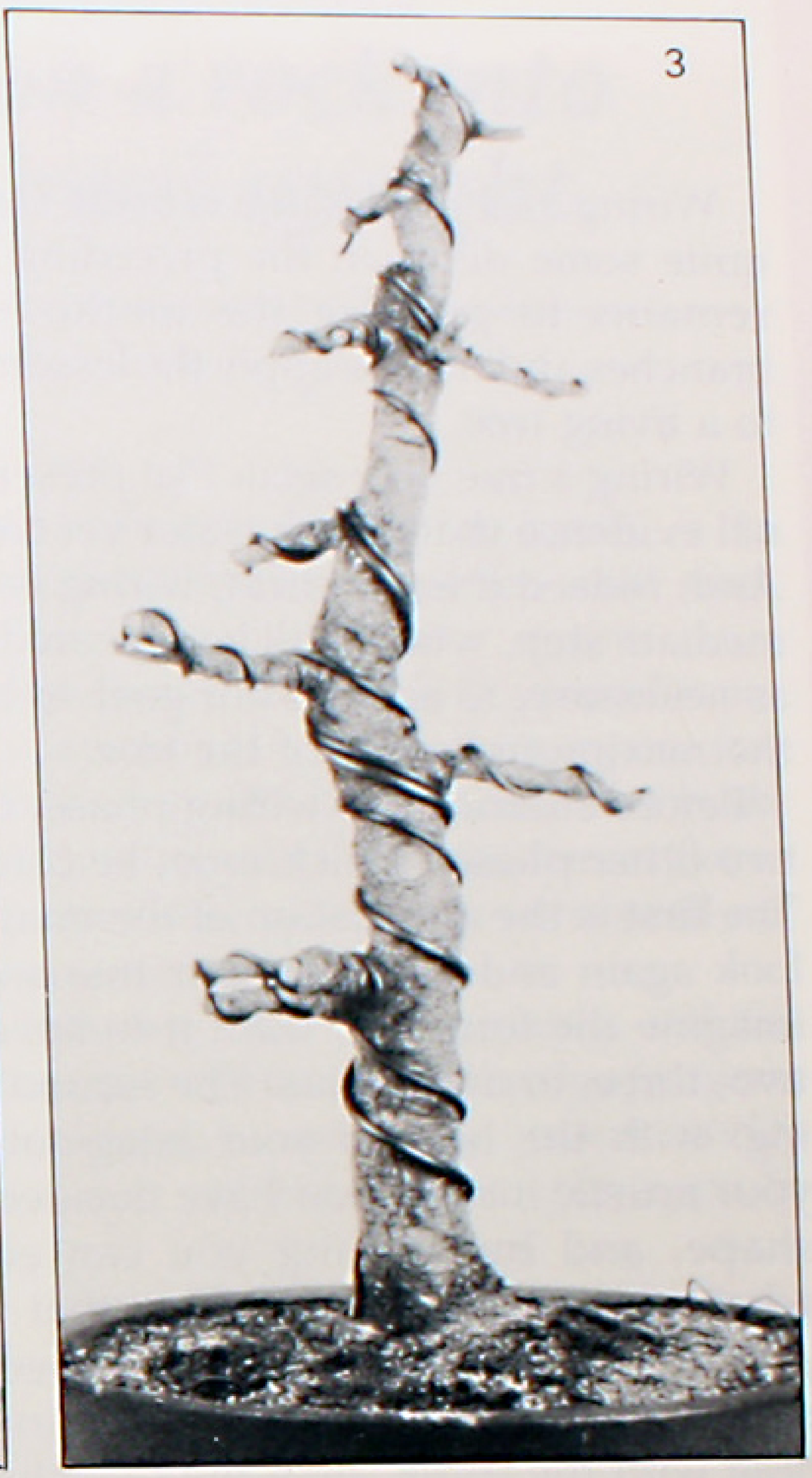
Wiring the trunk



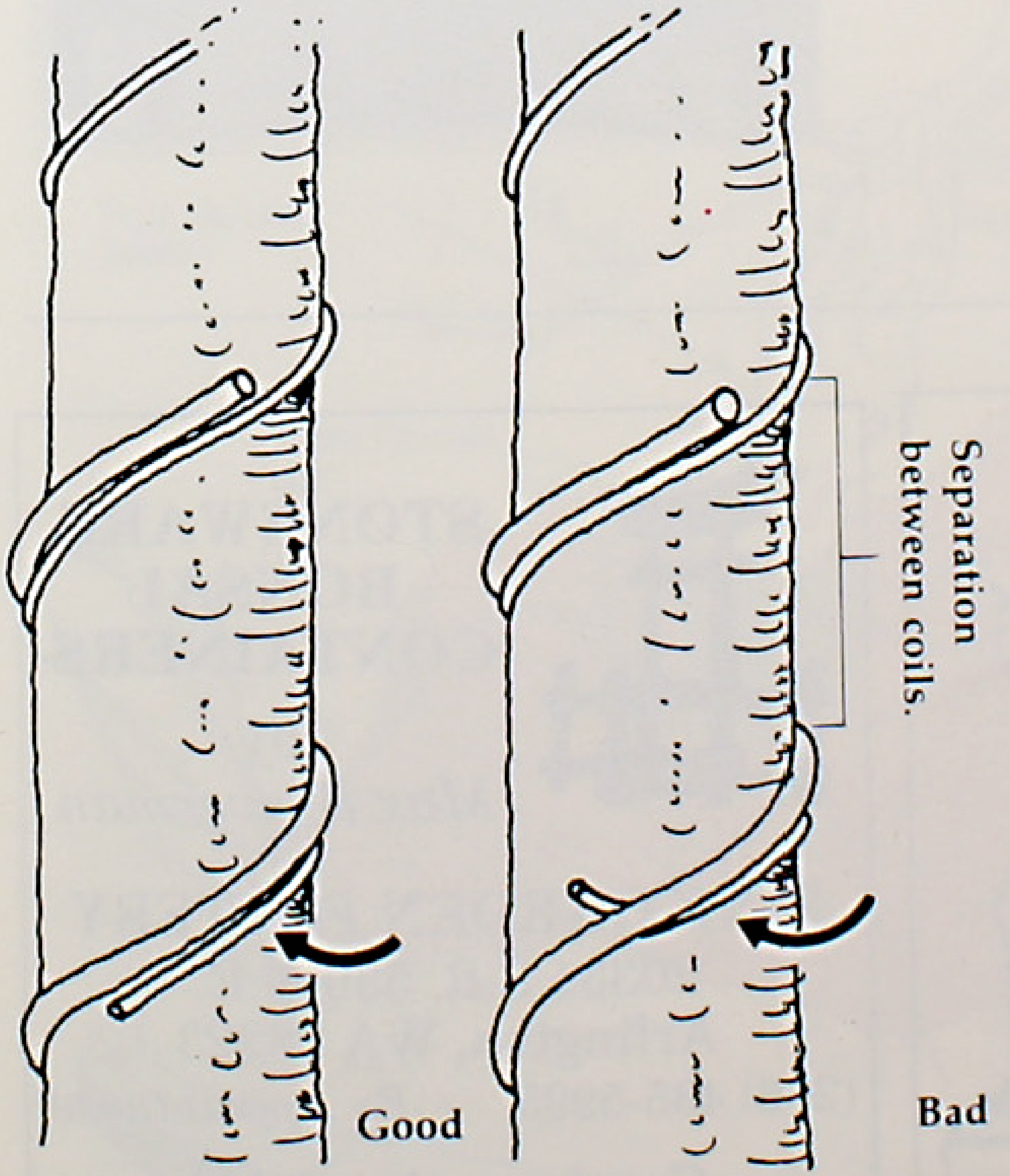
1 We can begin by wiring up the trunk to one main branch.



2 Then we can wire the rest of the branches.

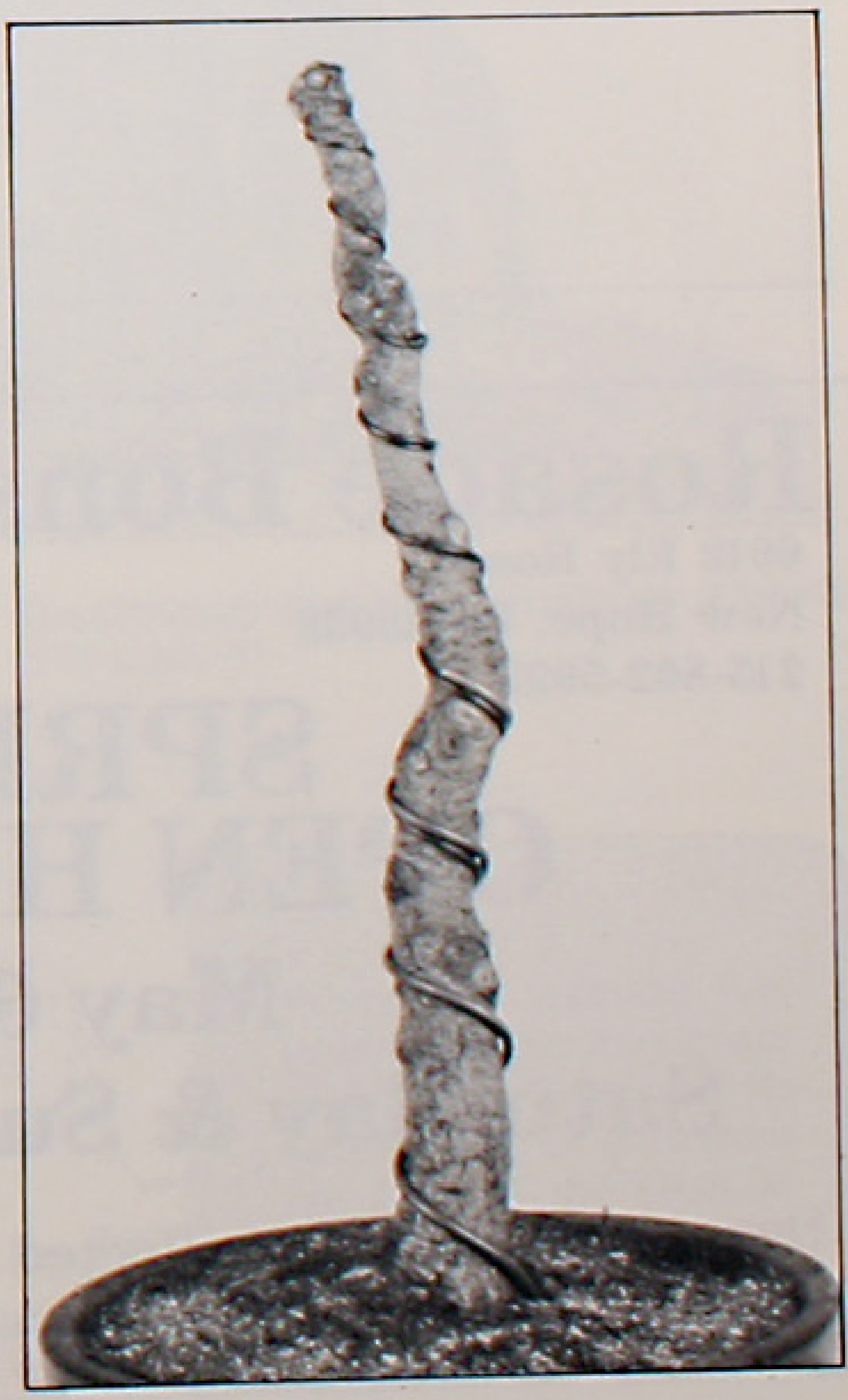


3 Back view. Note that we have been careful not to cross wires.



If we wish to use wires of differing gauges, we can apply them as shown in Sketch A; but never as in Sketch B. The photograph to the right shows two wires correctly applied.

4



8 Conclusion

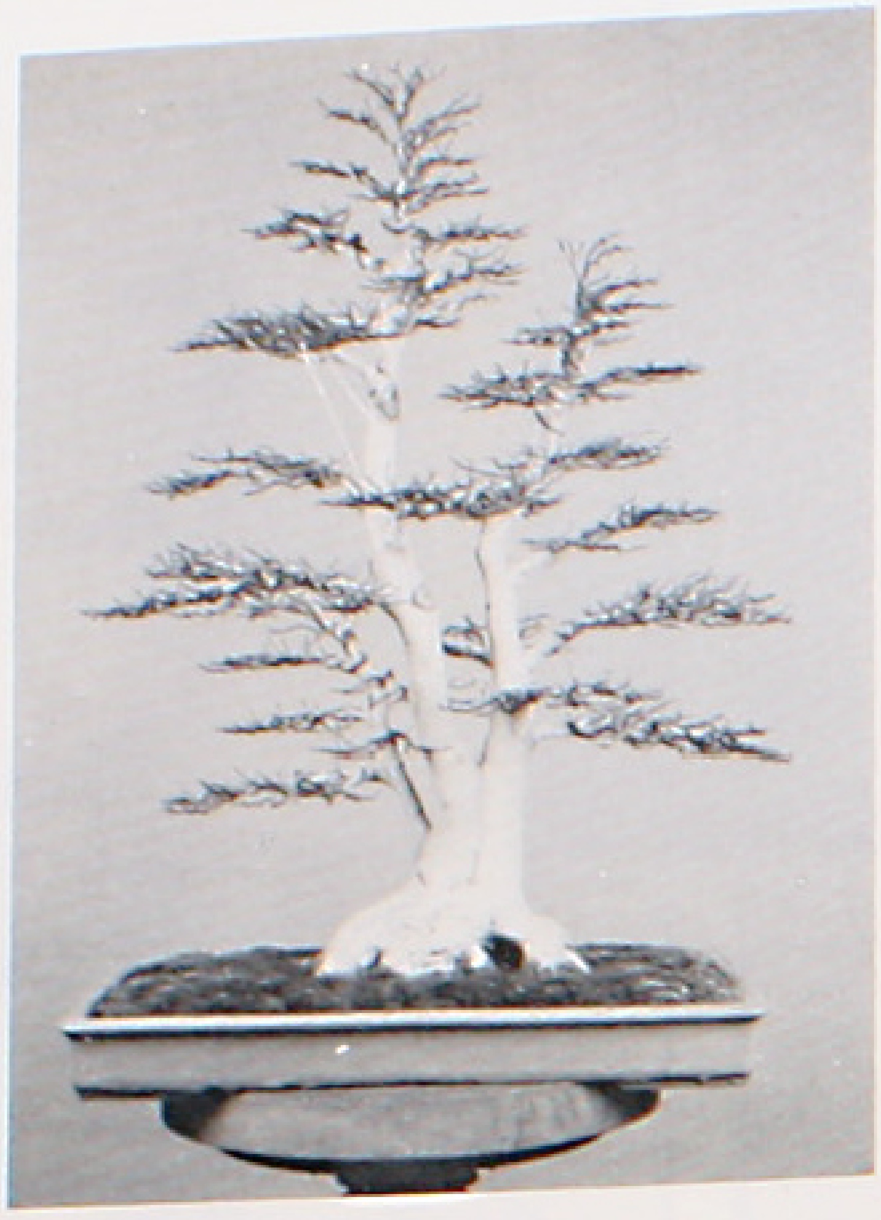
Wiring techniques have been explored in quite some detail in the preceding pages. It remains to practice the methods on dry branches and then to apply the lessons learned to a living tree.

Wiring a tree may seem like presenting visual evidence that "work is not yet complete". And, indeed it is. In effect, wiring is an intermediate step, which will be repeated as often as necessary, to achieve our goal: to bring out the maximum beauty of the tree.

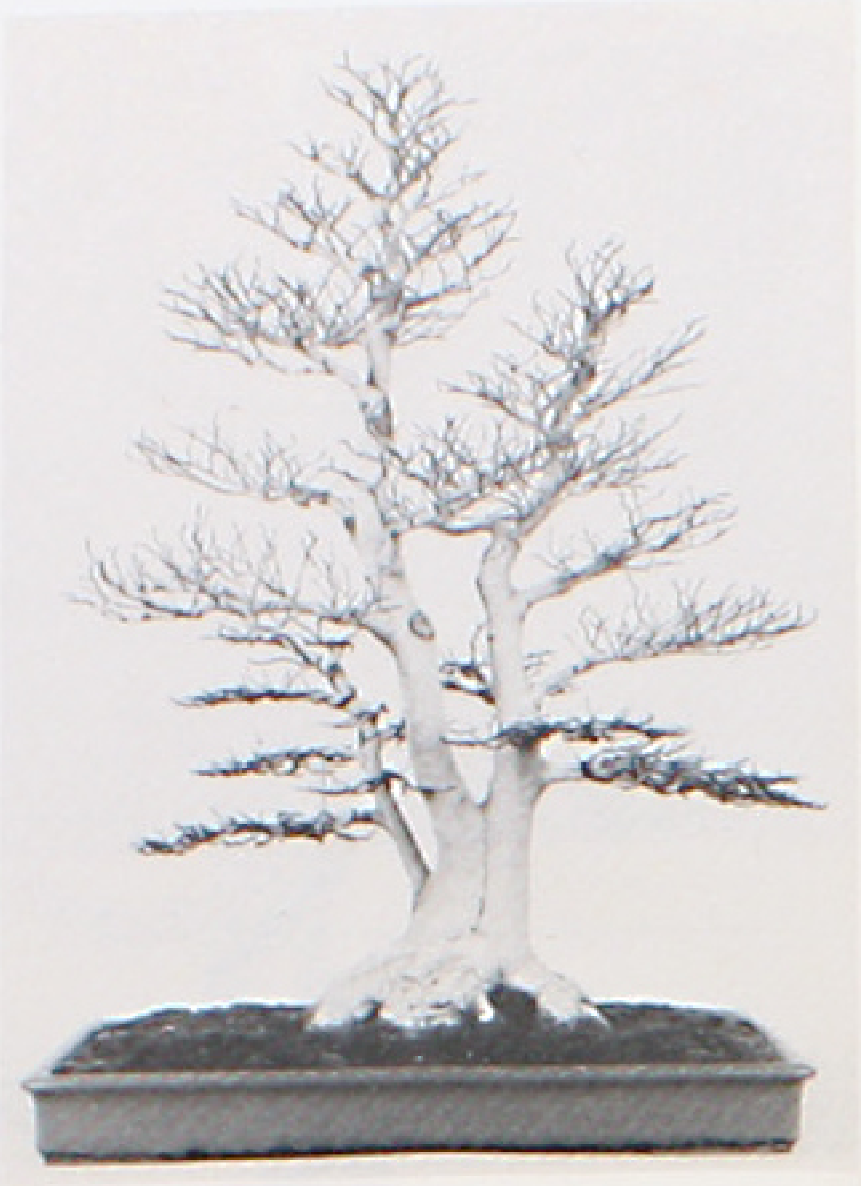
Before entering the wiring phase, there are two other phases which must be considered. The first is the application of the imagination: look again and again at your tree and try to imagine the form you want it to have within two, three, or more years. The second is pruning: with the help of your imagination and your artistic insight you have decided on the shape, and by pruning you can eliminate whatever seems to detract from that vision.

When these two phases have been completed, the moment has arrived to wire, beginning with the trunk, then the branches, and, finally, the twigs.

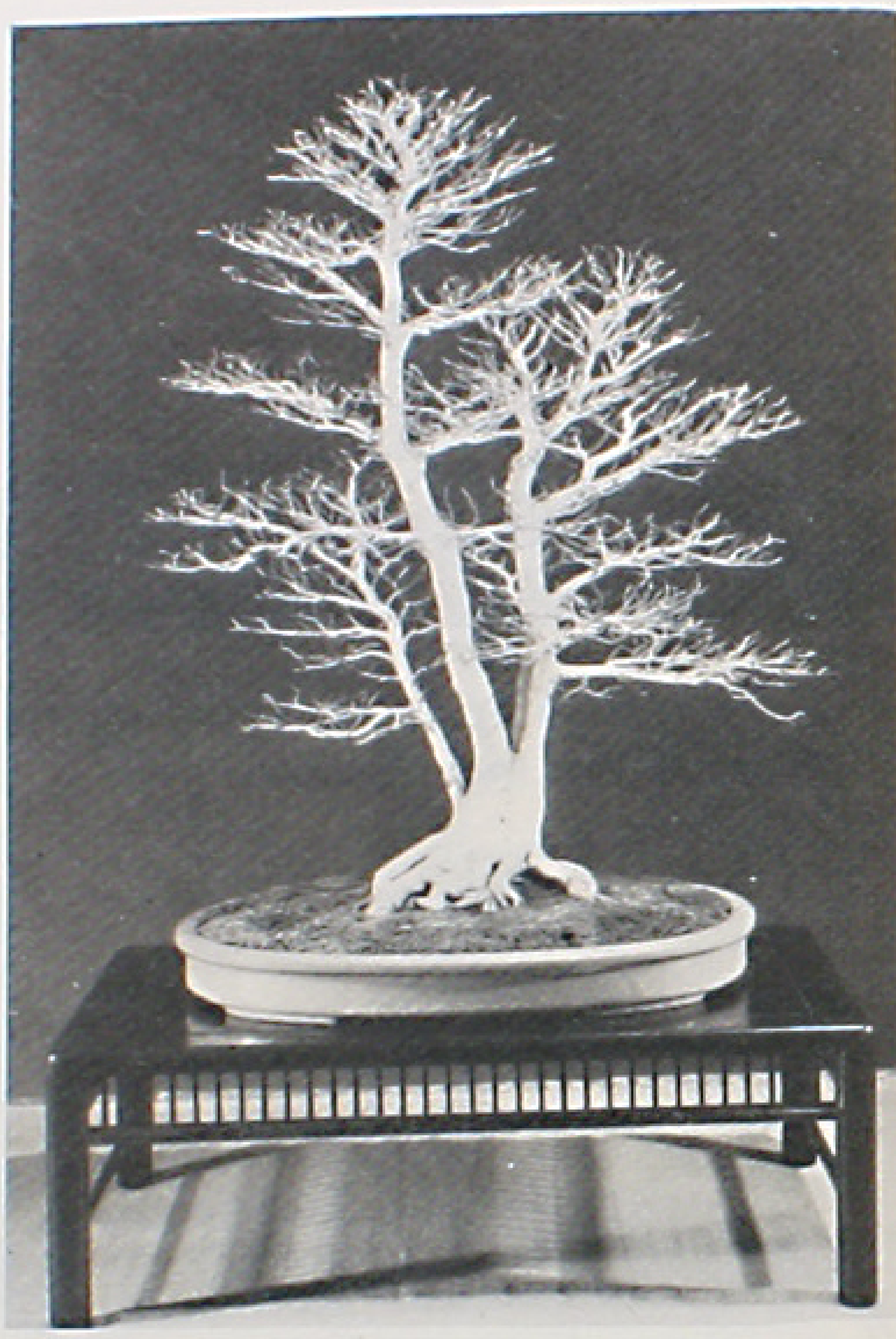
It is advisable, at least at the beginning, not to wire the whole tree at once. You should stop from time to time to observe the results and be able to adjust your plans as new subtleties emerge. You may find that there may be some branches which do not need wiring after all; others, which may have to be wired.



1 Japanese Beech, *Fagus crenata.* Height: 78 cm. A recent photograph shows the tree with pruning complete and wiring applied.



2 The same tree a few hours before, with pruning and wiring only partially completed.



Photograph taken eight years ago. The same basic style has been maintained only through careful pruning, pinching and wiring.

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WINTER JASMINE

Transformation of a winter jasmine rooted on a rock into an informal upright.

Author: KIHARA SUSUMU

In this article, the technique for transforming a winter jasmine grown in the root-over-rock style into a tree free of the rock and trained in an informal upright style is explained in detail.

Although the methods are particularized to jasmine, the principles and techniques may be applied to other deciduous species, with appropriate consideration of the requirements peculiar to that species.

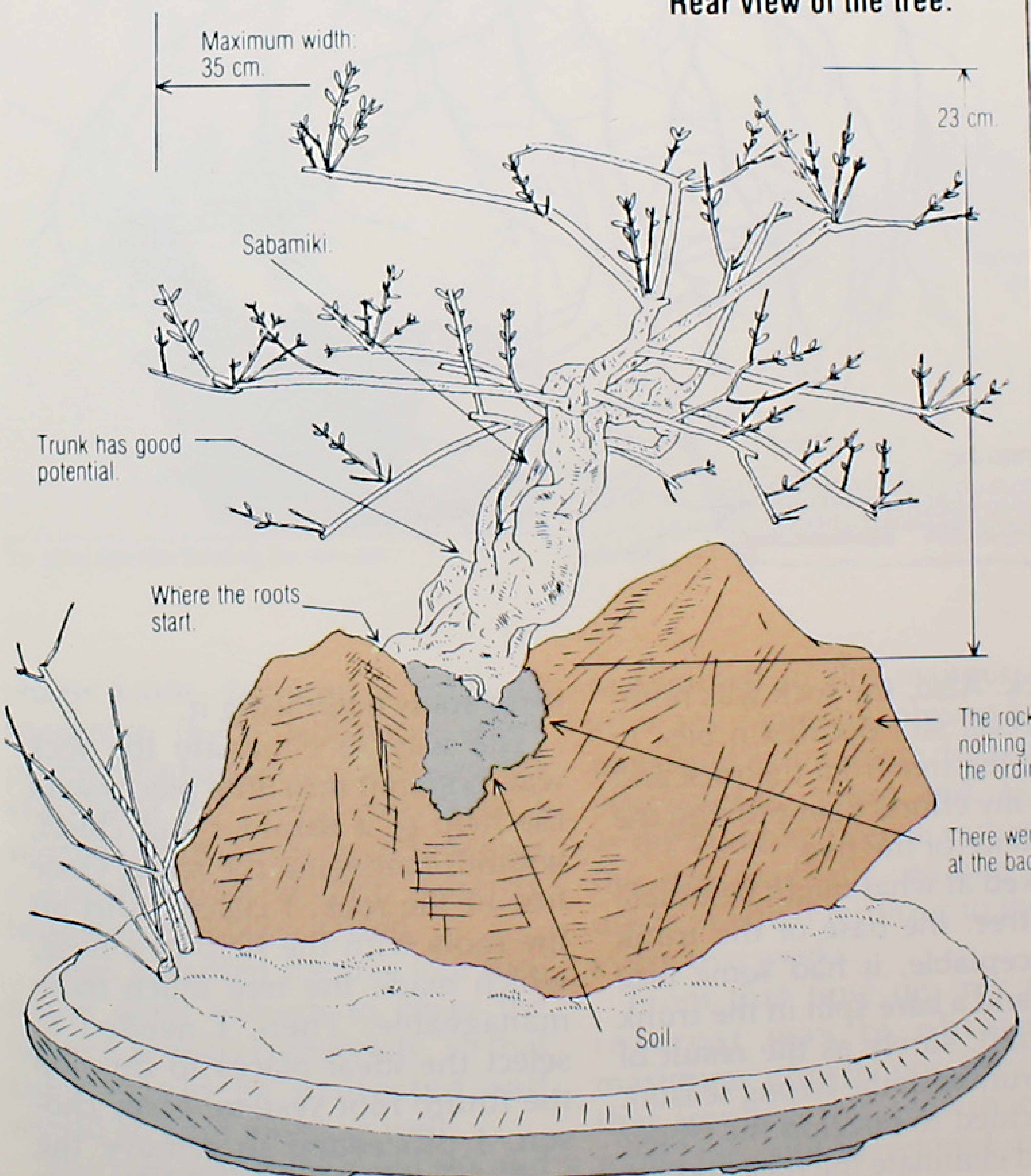
Jasmine are grown as Bonsai because of the beauty of their flowers. When we refer in this article to the winter jasmine, we are dealing with jasminum nudiflorum, the Japanese variety, with yellow flowers, known as OUBAI. Among the varieties most used for Bonsai in Japan are the poet's jasmine, j. officinale known as SOKEI and the jonquil-scented jasmine, j. odoratissimum known as KISOKEI.

Another variety, excellent for smaller size bonsai, is the small-leaved yellow stared jasmine, j. parkeri with small yellow flowers.

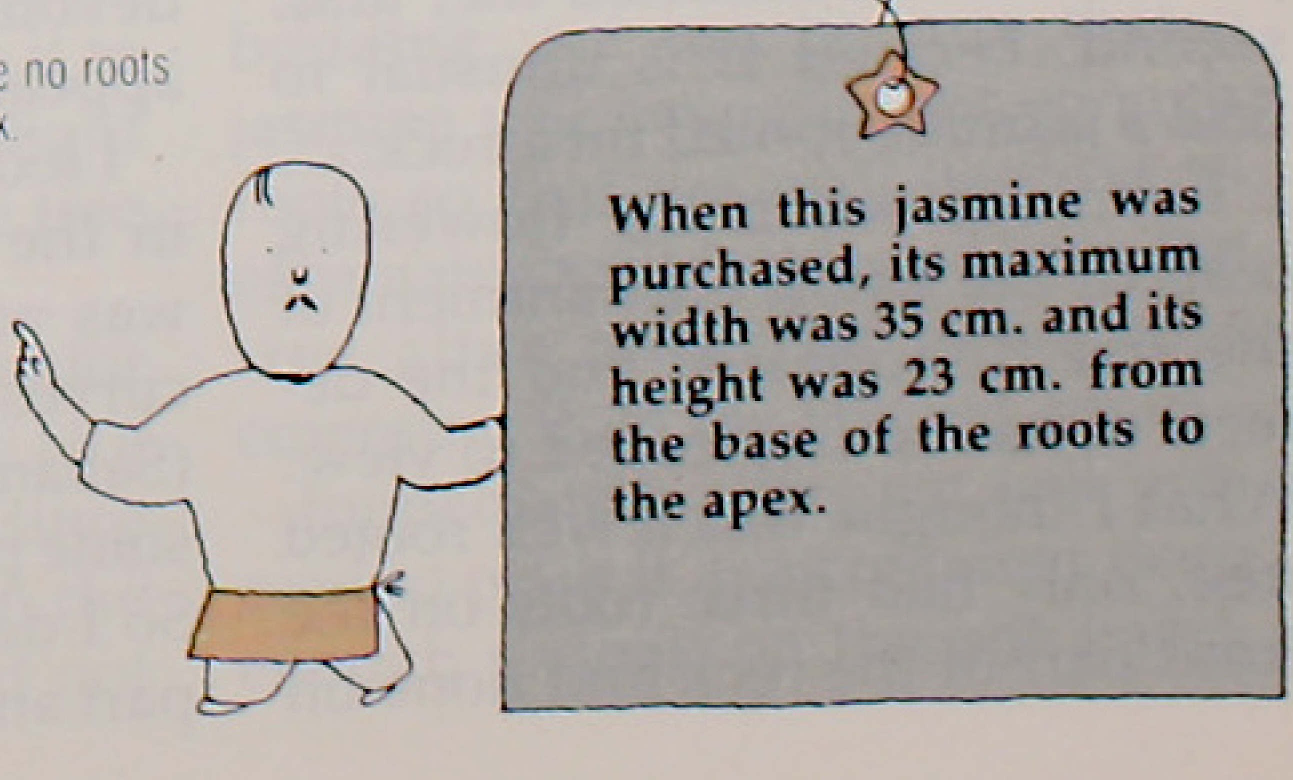
The winter jasmine is hardy to Zone 6. In warm climates it can be grown outdoors all year, but in cooler regions it is generally brought indoors or into the greenhouse before the temperature falls below 50 degrees F. Winter jasmine flower at the beginning of spring, having yellow flowers, small and with six petals; they do not have a scent.

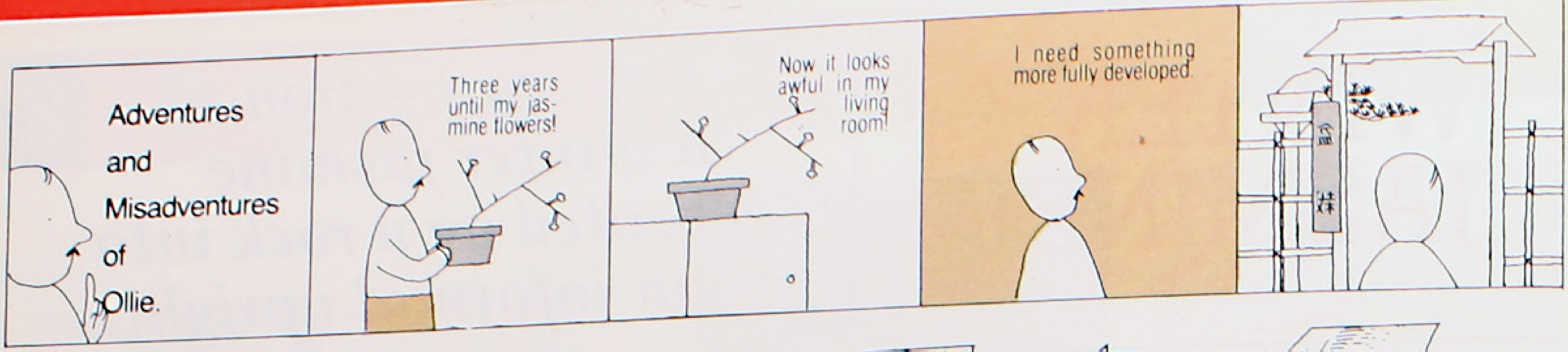
In spring, after flowering, they bud vigorously, and it is not difficult to obtain a fine ramification with only a few years of cultivation. Winter jasmine root easily, recover quickly from root pruning, and are very easy to propagate by cuttings or layering.

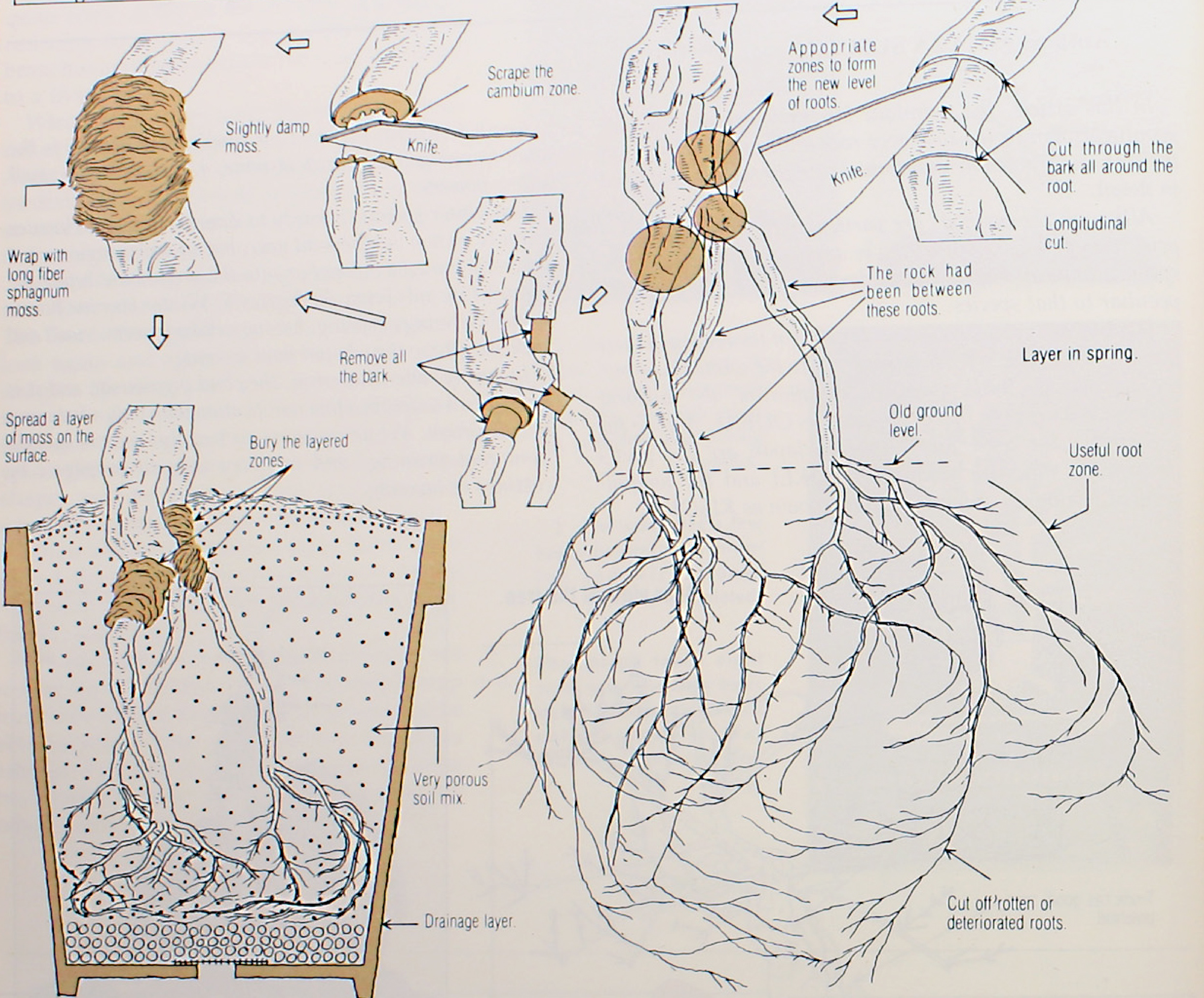
Rear view of the tree.


Maximum width: 35 cm.
23 cm.
Sabamiki.
Trunk has good potential.
Where the roots start.
The rock was nothing out of the ordinary
There were no roots at the back
Soil.

This photograph shows the tree 10 years ago, at the time of its acquisition.


When this jasmine was purchased, its maximum width was 35 cm. and its height was 23 cm. from the base of the roots to the apex.


Adventures and Misadventures of Ollie.
Three years until my jasmine flowers!
Now it looks awful in my living room!
I need something more fully developed.

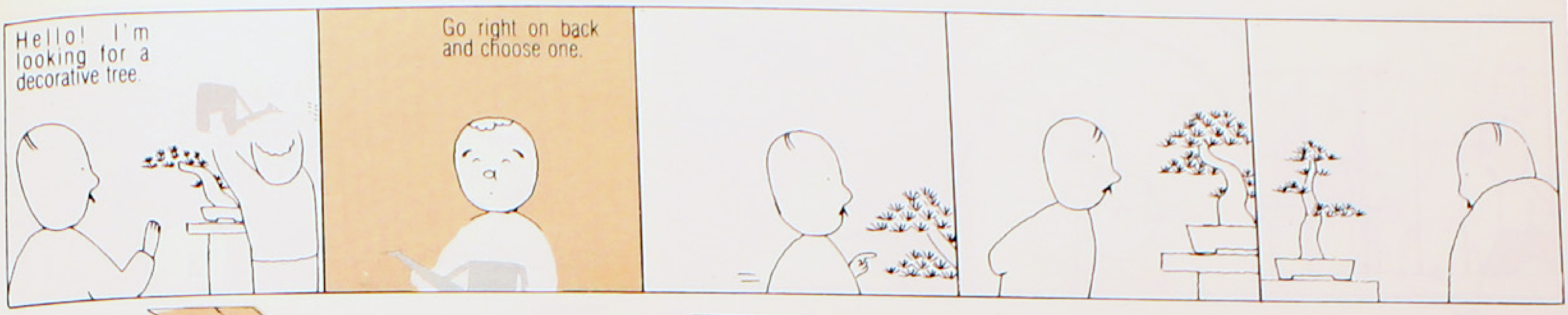

Appopriate zones to form the new level of roots.
Cut through the bark all around the root.
Knife.
Longitudinal cut.
Scrape the cambium zone.
Knife.
Slightly damp moss.
Wrap with long fiber sphagnum moss.
Remove all the bark.
The rock had been between these roots.
Layer in spring.
Old ground level.
Useful root zone.
Spread a layer of moss on the surface.
Bury the layered zones.
Very porous soil mix.
Drainage layer.
Cut off rotten or deteriorated roots.

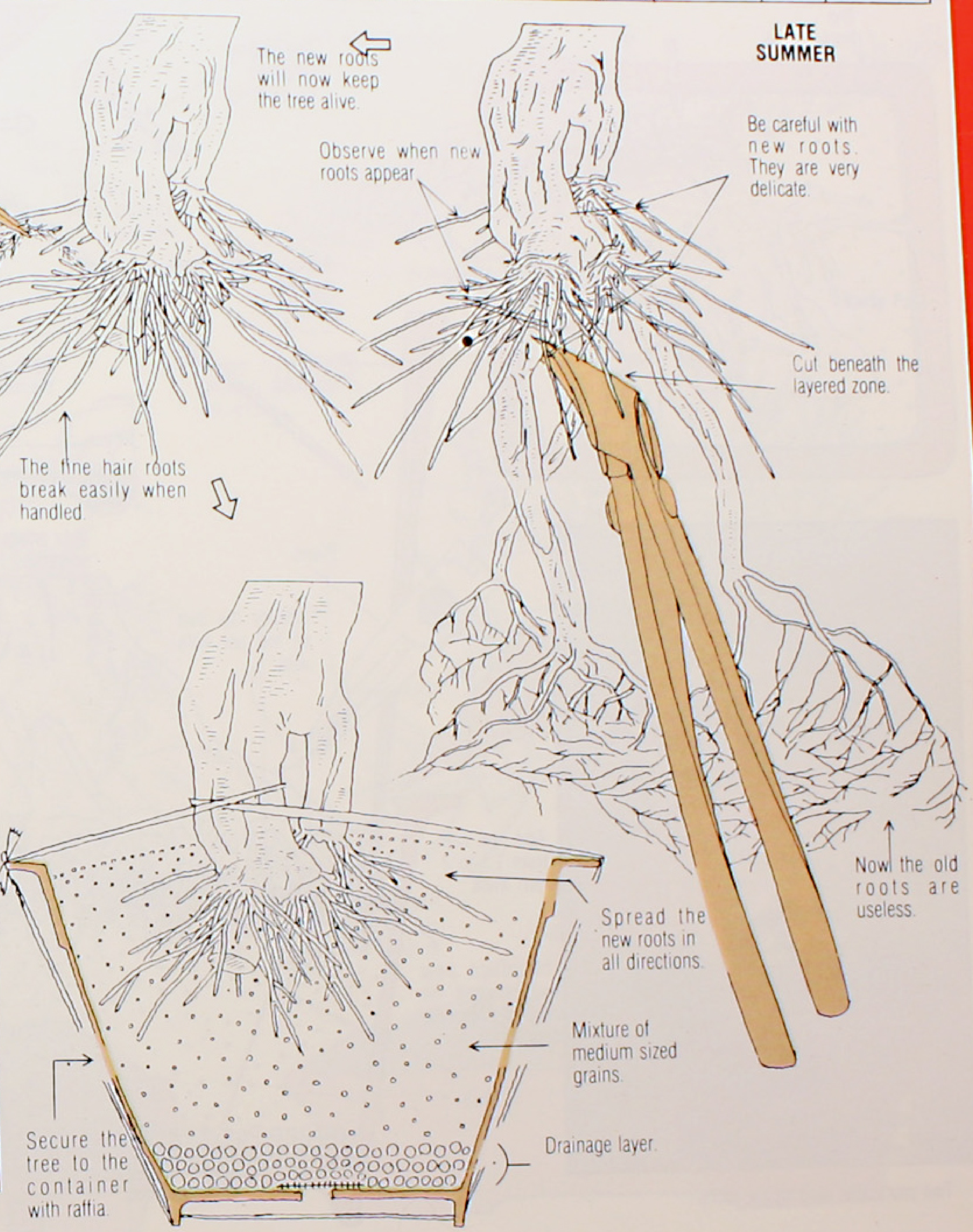
When I bought this tree, some 10 years ago, I did so for two reasons: first, the color of its little yellow flowers attracted me, and, second, because it is unusual to find a jasmine rooted on a rock.

Even so, when the flowering ceased, the whole enchantment of the tree disappeared and the defects of its rooting leaped to view. What I thought was a well rooted tree, only had three roots on the front part of the rock and none on the back. Also, the rock was nothing special, so I decided it best to remove the tree from the rock and devote my efforts to improving the appearance of the tree.

I looked at what might be usable in the tree: the base of the trunk was acceptable, it had some nice curves and a bare split in the trunk (Sabamiki), surely as the result of some pruning at the wrong season. So I decided to develop the upper part and eliminate the rock and the three roots embracing it.

The way to eliminate the rock was to split it into little pieces with the help of a hammer and chisel, without damaging the roots. Once free of the rock, I cleaned dirt off the roots with the help of a hose, which made the tree much more manageable. Then, I needed to select the ideal places to develop the future root system. Once chosen, I proceeded to remove the bark in these areas with a very


Hello! I'm looking for a decorative tree.
Go right on back and choose one.


Tweezers.
Get rid of the moss with pincers. If the roots are over-watered, they could die.
The new roots will now keep the tree alive.
The fine hair roots break easily when handled.
LATE SUMMER
Observe when new roots appear.
Be careful with new roots. They are very delicate.
Cut beneath the layered zone.
Now the old roots are useless.
Spread the new roots in all directions.
Mixture of medium sized grains.
Drainage layer.
Secure the tree to the container with raffia.

The same tree after budding the next year.

sharp knife, forming a ring, as shown in the illustrations. After peeling the bark in accordance with standard layering practice, I wrapped it in damp moss to which a small quantity of rooting hormone had been added.

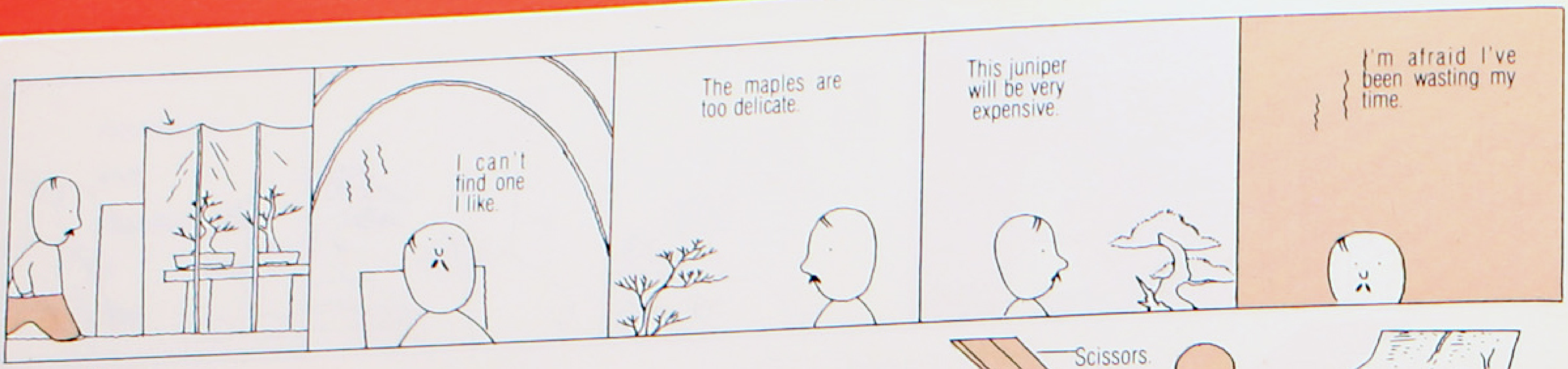
Then I planted the tree in a container deep enough to cover the layered regions completely, so that they would be protected and would be kept moist as well.

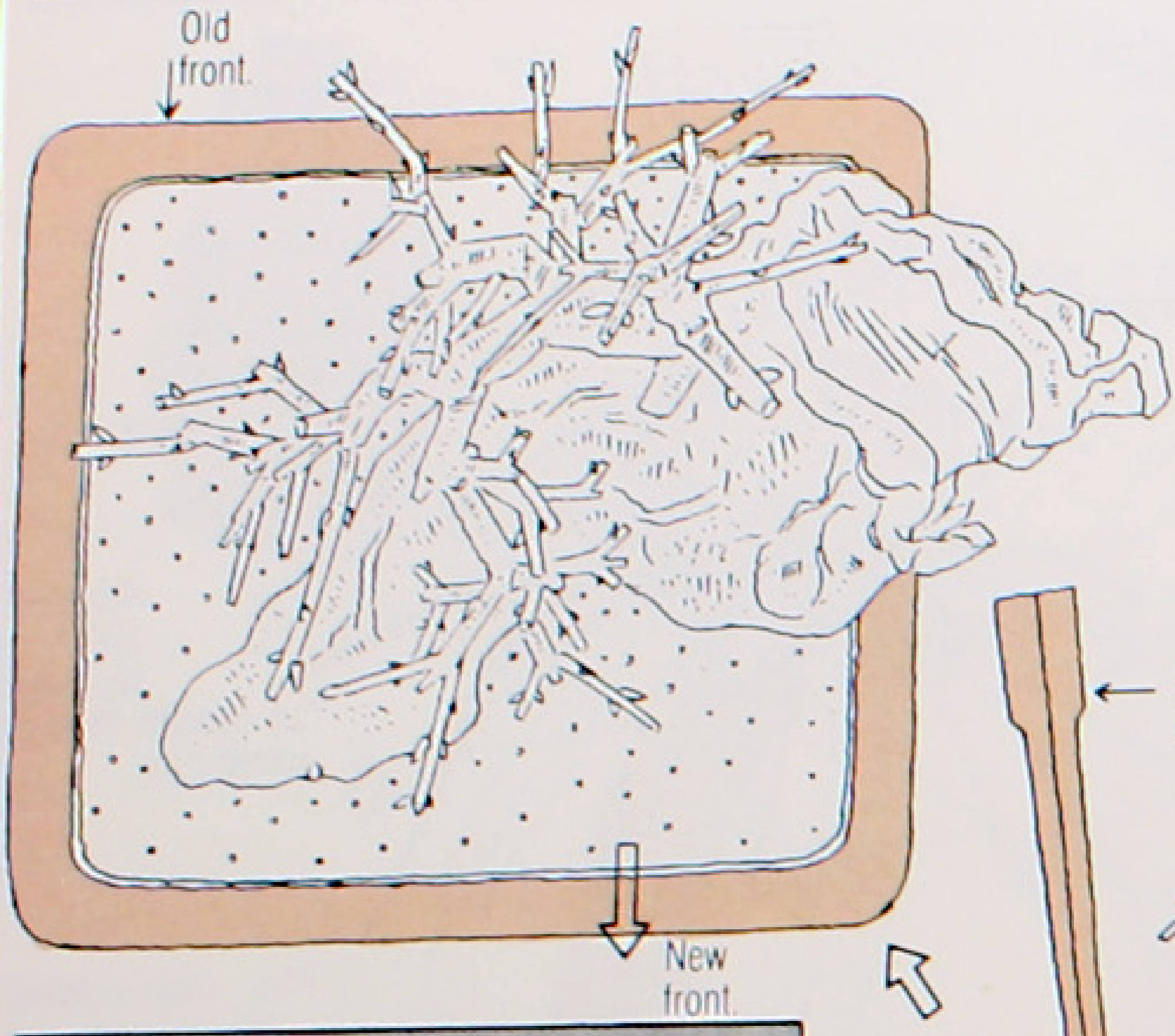
The tree was then cared for and maintained in the manner usual after any repotting: always keep it moist and in the shade, try never to overwater the plant, and, as soon as the budding begins, expose it to the sun gradually, adding slight doses of liquid fertilizer to the tree every two weeks.

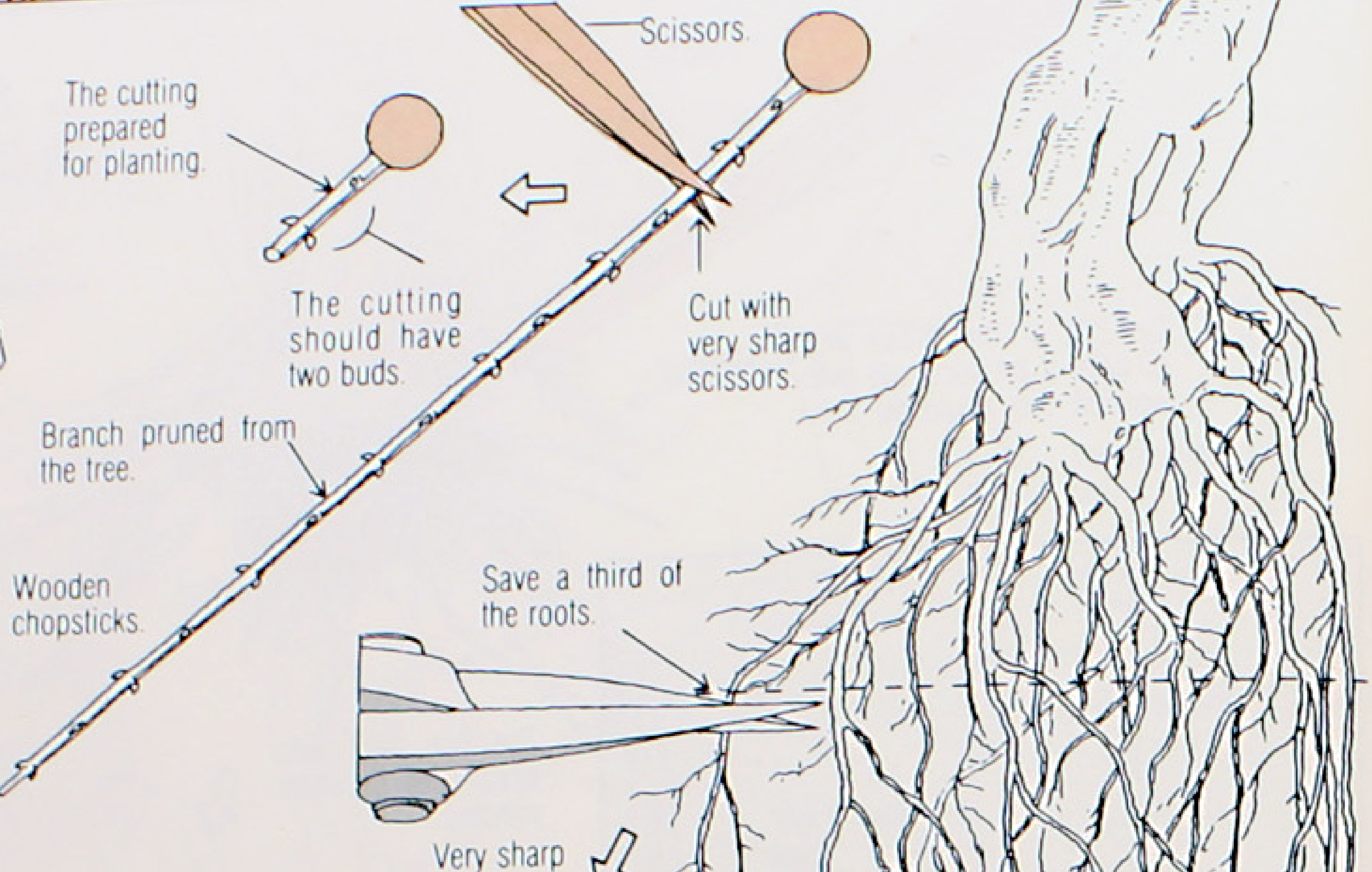
From that time on, my major interest was to obtain the maximum growth possible, since that implied the growth of the roots, too, and therefore I did not prune any of the tree's buds.

Generally, seven or eight months after a layering, depending, of course, on the vigor of the budding, we can be sure that a jasmine will have put out enough roots so that we may proceed to eliminate the old ones and keep the tree alive with the new roots emerging from the layered zones.

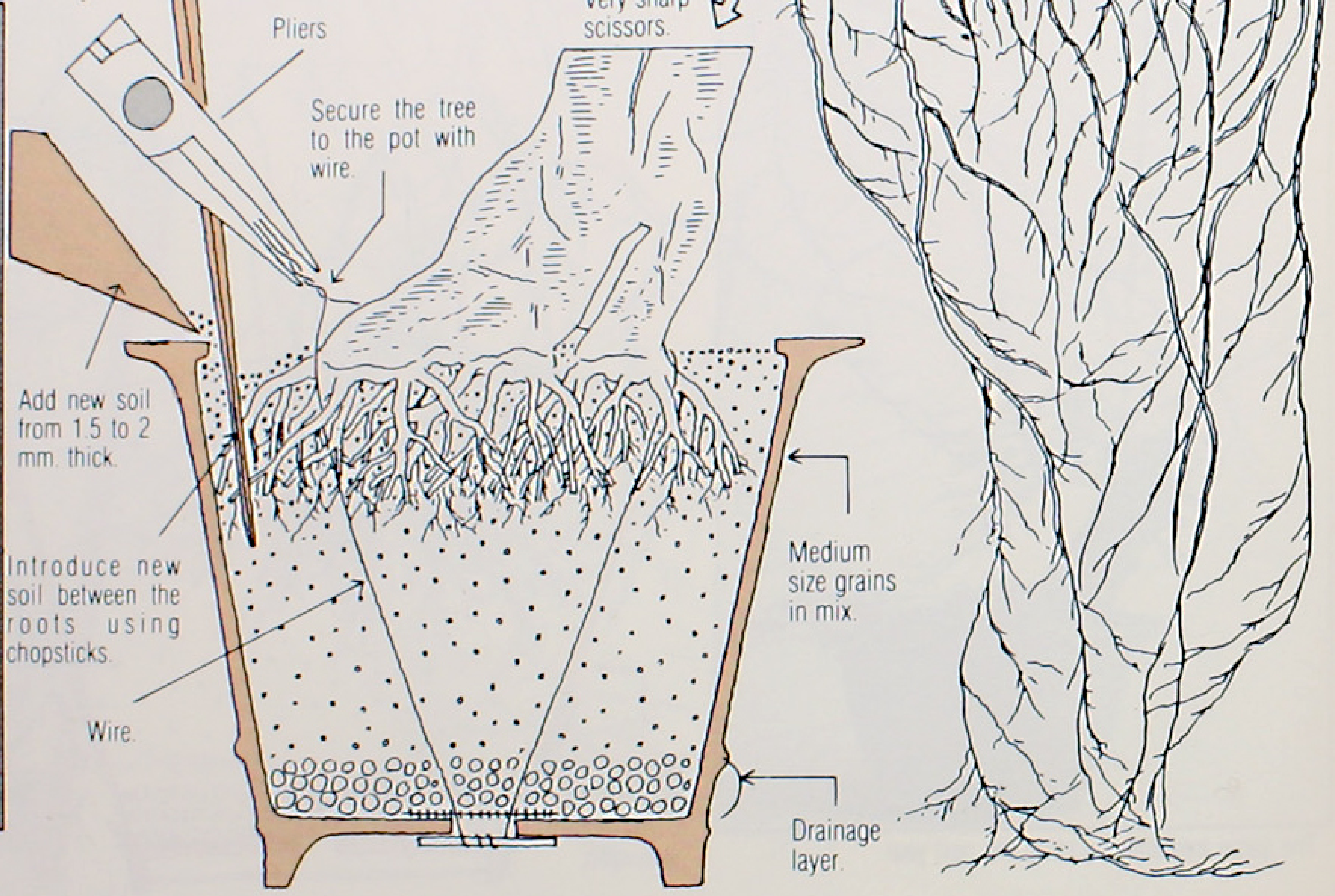
Immediately after, we will proceed to plant it in a container deep enough so that, on the one hand,


I can't find one I like.
The maples are too delicate.
This juniper will be very expensive.
I'm afraid I've been wasting my time.




Scissors.
The cutting prepared for planting.
The cutting should have two buds.
Cut with very sharp scissors.
Branch pruned from the tree.
Save a third of the roots.

Two years after layering the roots.


Very sharp scissors.
Pliers
Secure the tree to the pot with wire.
Add new soil from 1.5 to 2 mm. thick.
Introduce new soil between the roots using chopsticks.
Wire.
Medium size grains in mix.
Drainage layer.

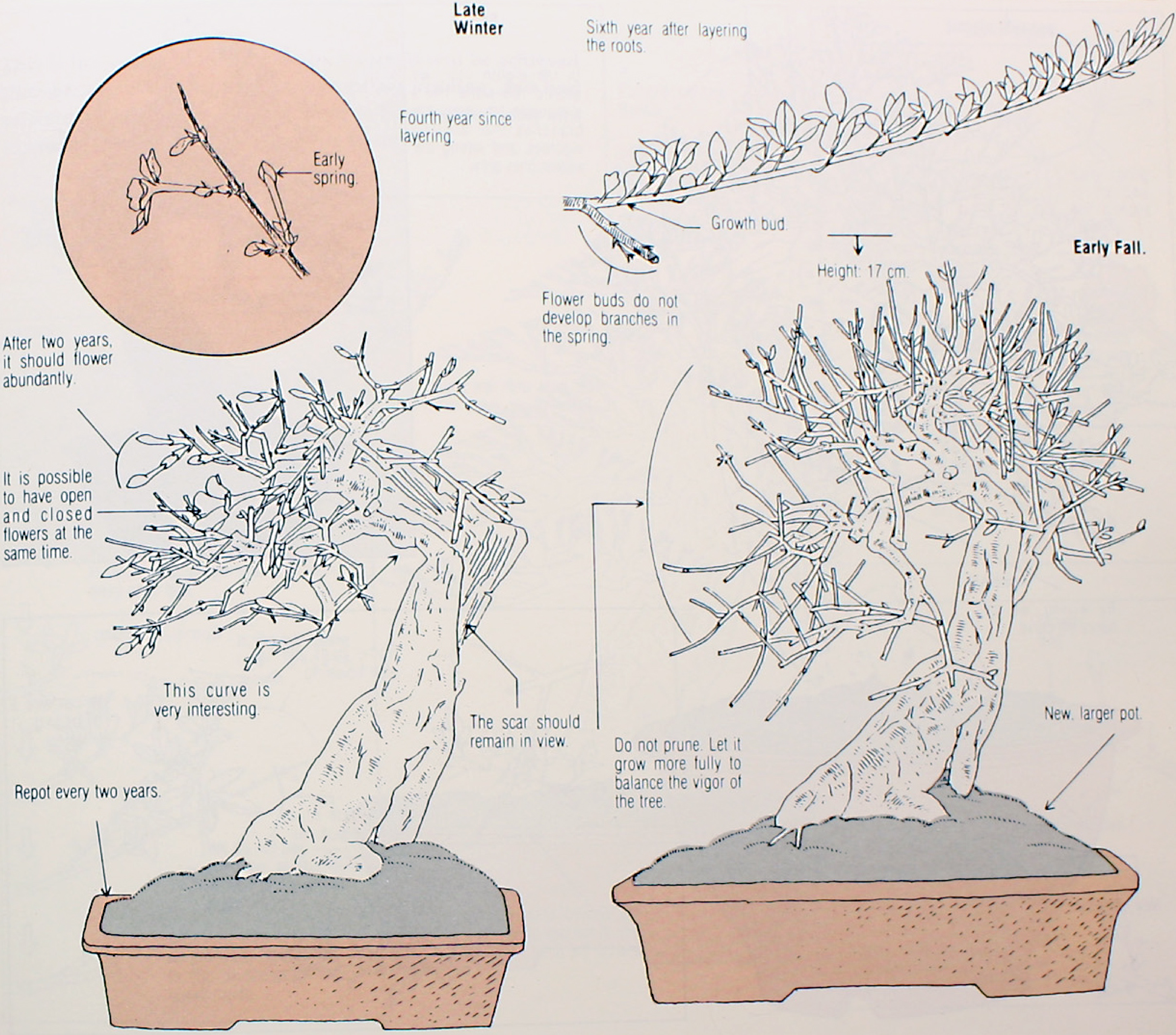
the roots are covered and, on the other, it will have enough soil to be able to grow freely for the next two years. The tree should be tied securely into the container in order to avoid damage to the roots which might be caused by wind moving the plant straining the newly formed root system.

Two years later, keeping in mind the jasmine's great rapidity of growth, we shall need to transplant it into a container, this time more appropriate to the aesthetics we are trying to achieve.

Repotting is done in the usual manner, cutting all unnecessary roots. We already need to start considering surface rootage, which means developing roots fully around the base of the tree, cutting those that cross each other and those that do not grow from the same level as the others.

This is also the time to select the front of the tree, and to prune, depending on the final design. The appropriate time to prune is the same as that of repotting, in the early spring. If you don't do it at that time, the tree could even lose some branches through die-back, in which the branches slowly dry up from the tip progressing to where they emerge from the trunk. Probably the sabamiki this tree has in the trunk is the result of being pruned at the wrong season, or because a large wound was not

What's this?
It's a jasmine!
What's more, it's been rooted on top of a rock.
But I have a jasmine already.
I'd just have to wait 10 more years.

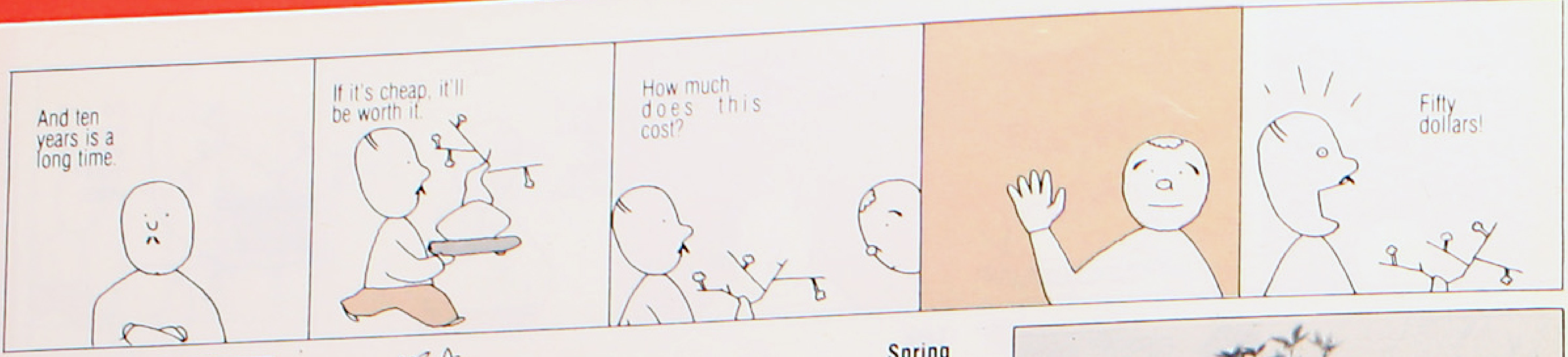

Late Winter
Sixth year after layering the roots.
Fourth year since layering.
Early spring.
Growth bud.
Early Fall.
Height: 17 cm.
Flower buds do not develop branches in the spring.
After two years, it should flower abundantly.
It is possible to have open and closed flowers at the same time.
This curve is very interesting.
The scar should remain in view.
Do not prune. Let it grow more fully to balance the vigor of the tree.
New, larger pot.
Repot every two years.

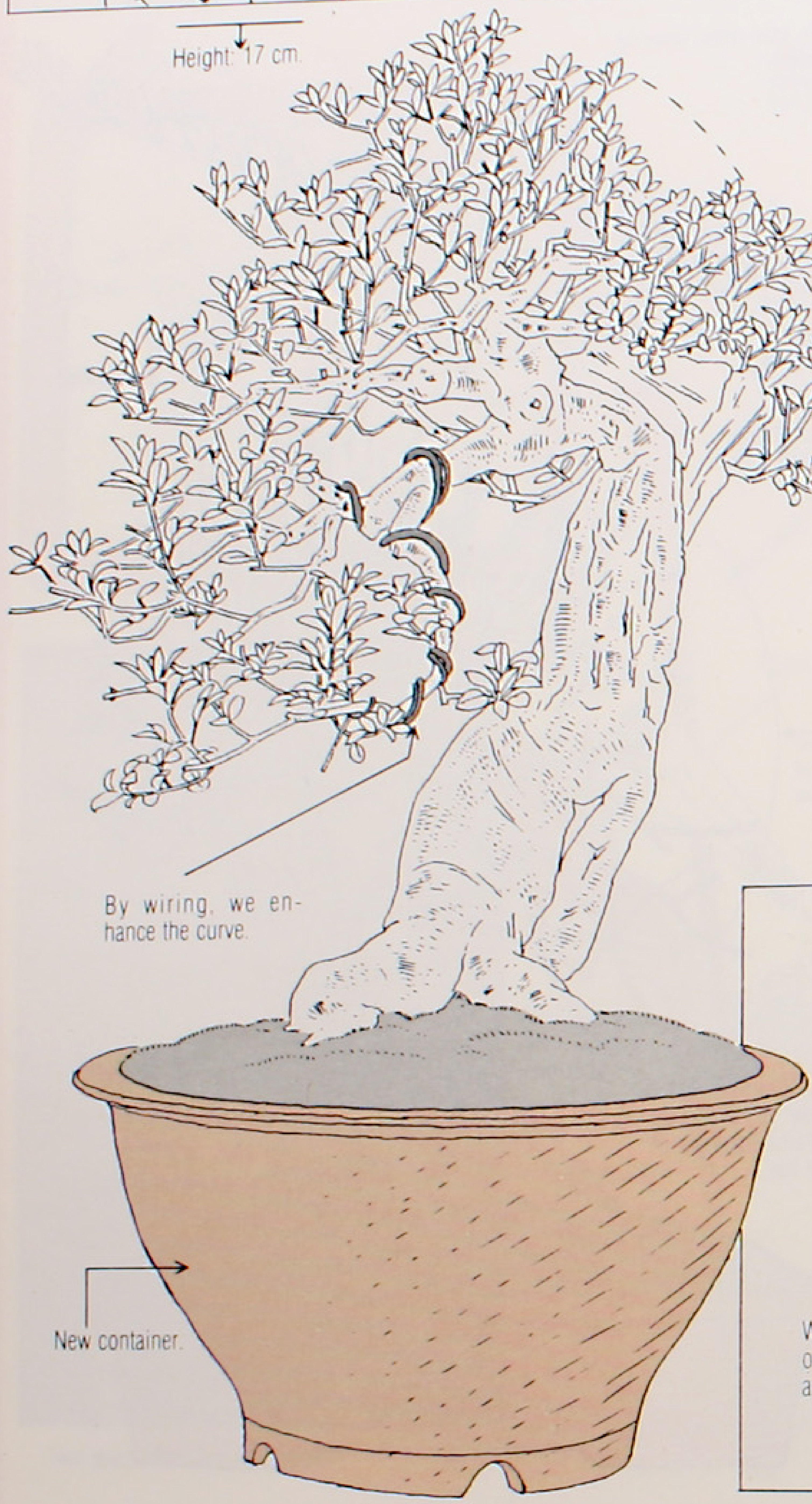
covered with sealing paste.

If we wish to reproduce a jasmine through cuttings, early spring is the best time to do so. We select the thickest of the branches that we have pruned, preferably from the area closest to the trunk. We wrap the large end of the branch in a little ball of clay, as shown in the sketch, and cut the branch leaving two buds. The little ball of clay will serve as a way to provide moisture to the base of the branch until it puts out roots. Later we plant the cuttings in a medium with good drainage (with abundant river sand) and keep it moist. About two weeks later, the first symptoms of new buds in the cuttings should appear, indicating that the cutting is taking root.

After the tree is planted in a suitable bonsai pot, effort is directed to shaping the branches and developing good ramification. I would like to comment on the shaping process, since jasmines are treated a little differently than most species.

In late winter, before the leaf buds begin to stir, our tree should begin to flower. This tree will not grow at this time, because all its energy is directed towards flowering. After flowering, the tree will begin to bud and send out new branches, but only at those points where it has not flowered; that is, the flower buds do not develop


And ten years is a long time.
If it's cheap, it'll be worth it.
How much does this cost?
Fifty dollars!



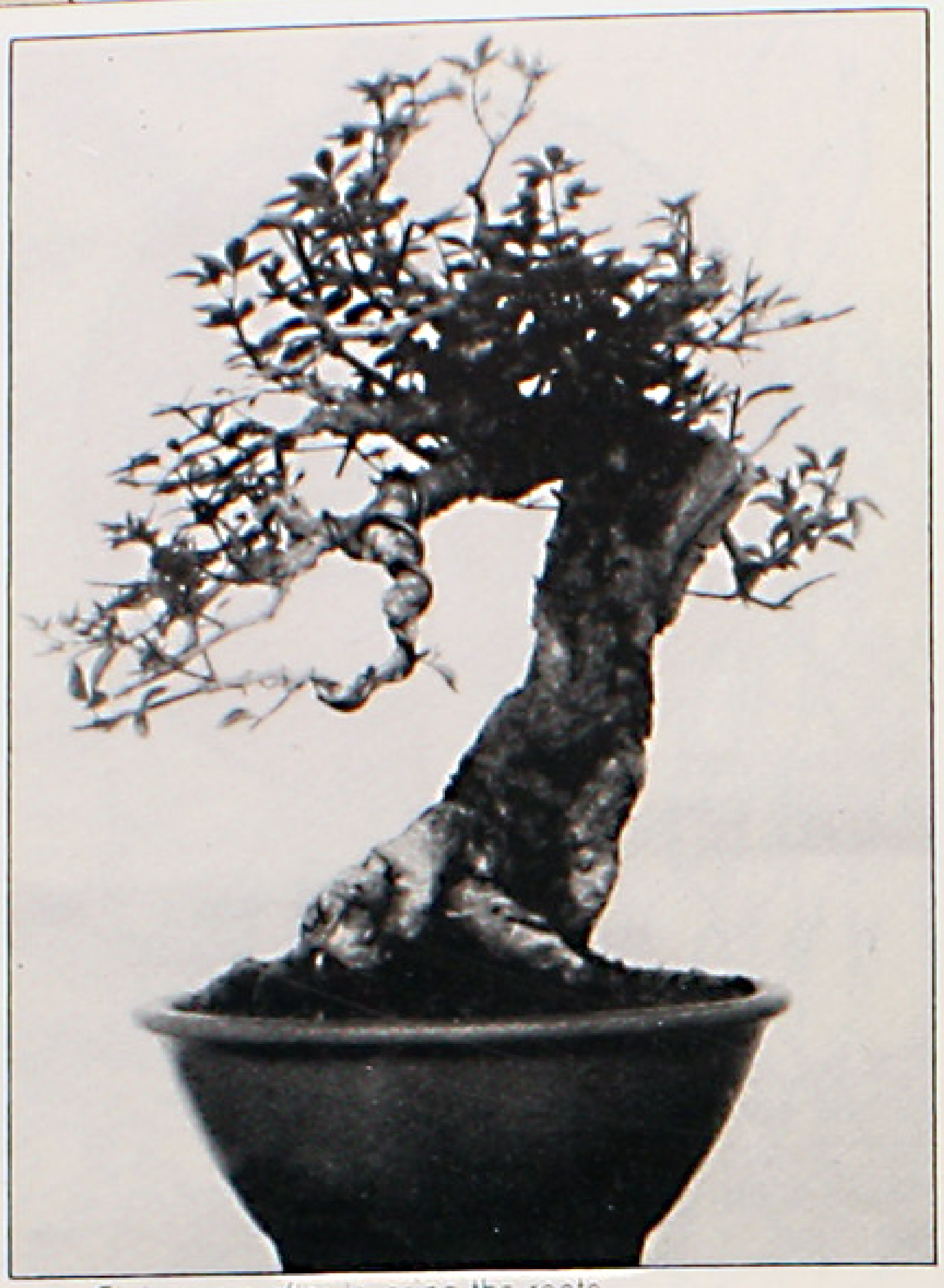
Spring

In the eighth year, we should refine the tree's silhouette, pruning the branches that are too vigorous and letting the weaker ones grow.

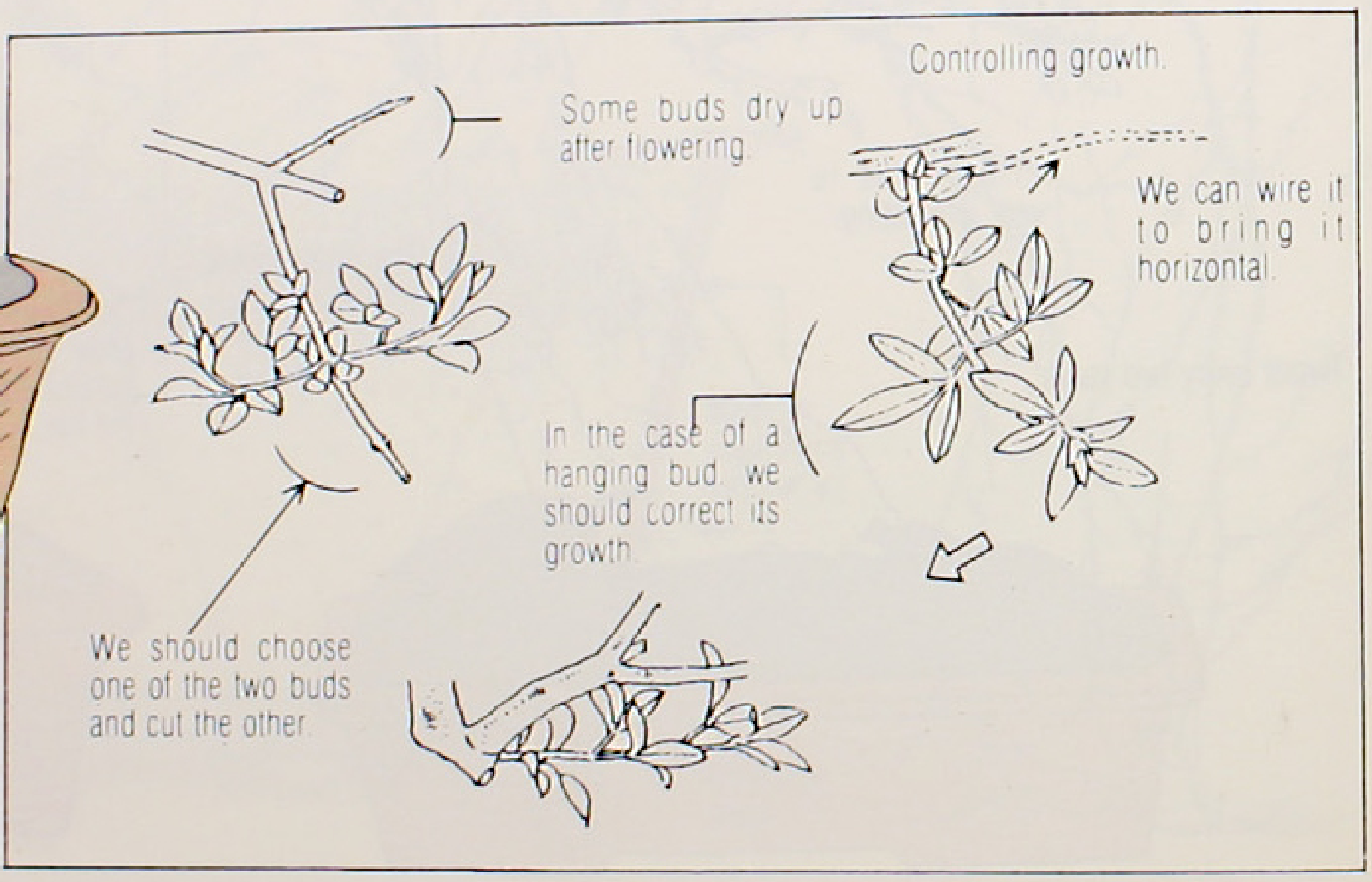
Let grow until late spring. Then, prune every other bud.

By wiring, we enhance the curve.

New container.



Eight years after layering the roots.



Controlling growth.

Some buds dry up after flowering.

We can wire it to bring it horizontal.

In the case of a hanging bud, we should correct its growth.

We should choose one of the two buds and cut the other.

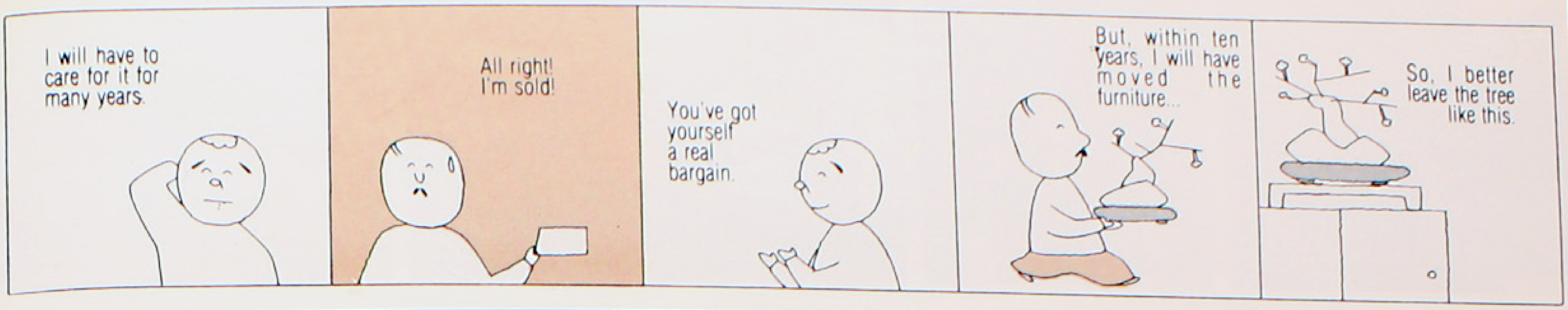
branches in spring, but dry up after flowering. And it is those buds that do not flower that will produce new branches. It is good to have this characteristic in mind when pruning, since the flower buds, of greater size, are not what will point to the new direction of growth. We need to prune considering the direction of the other little buds, the smaller ones, which are the ones that will be sending out the new branches.

As we prune, we should also keep in mind the design we wish to achieve and favor those zones of the tree that are weaker, not pruning them, or by cutting every fourth bud instead of cutting every other one.

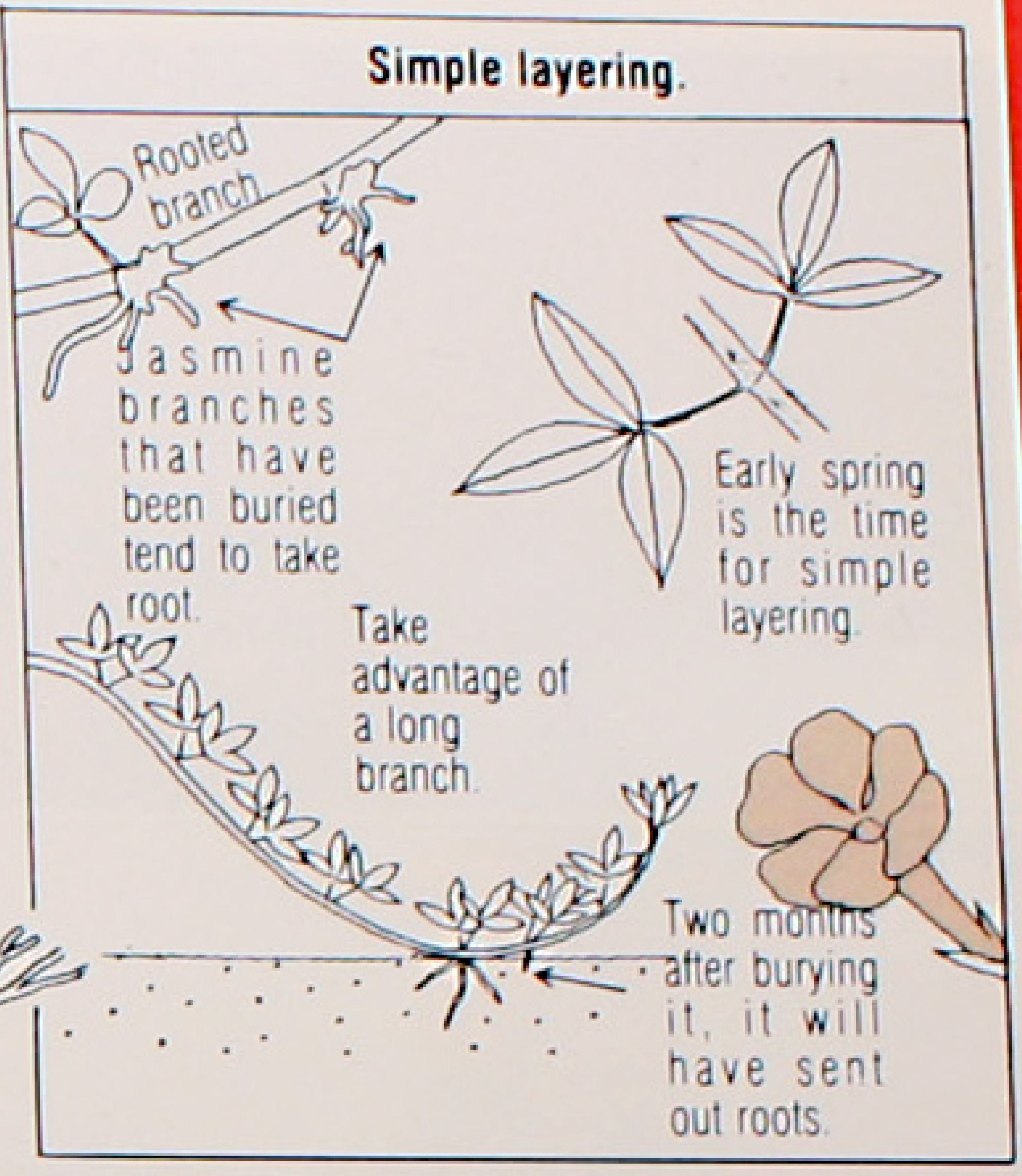
In this case, the weakest part of the tree is the left side. This is logical, since we have a hanging branch and the tree's sap is always directed to the highest areas or to those directed upwards. Therefore, it is appropriate to prune the right more than the left.

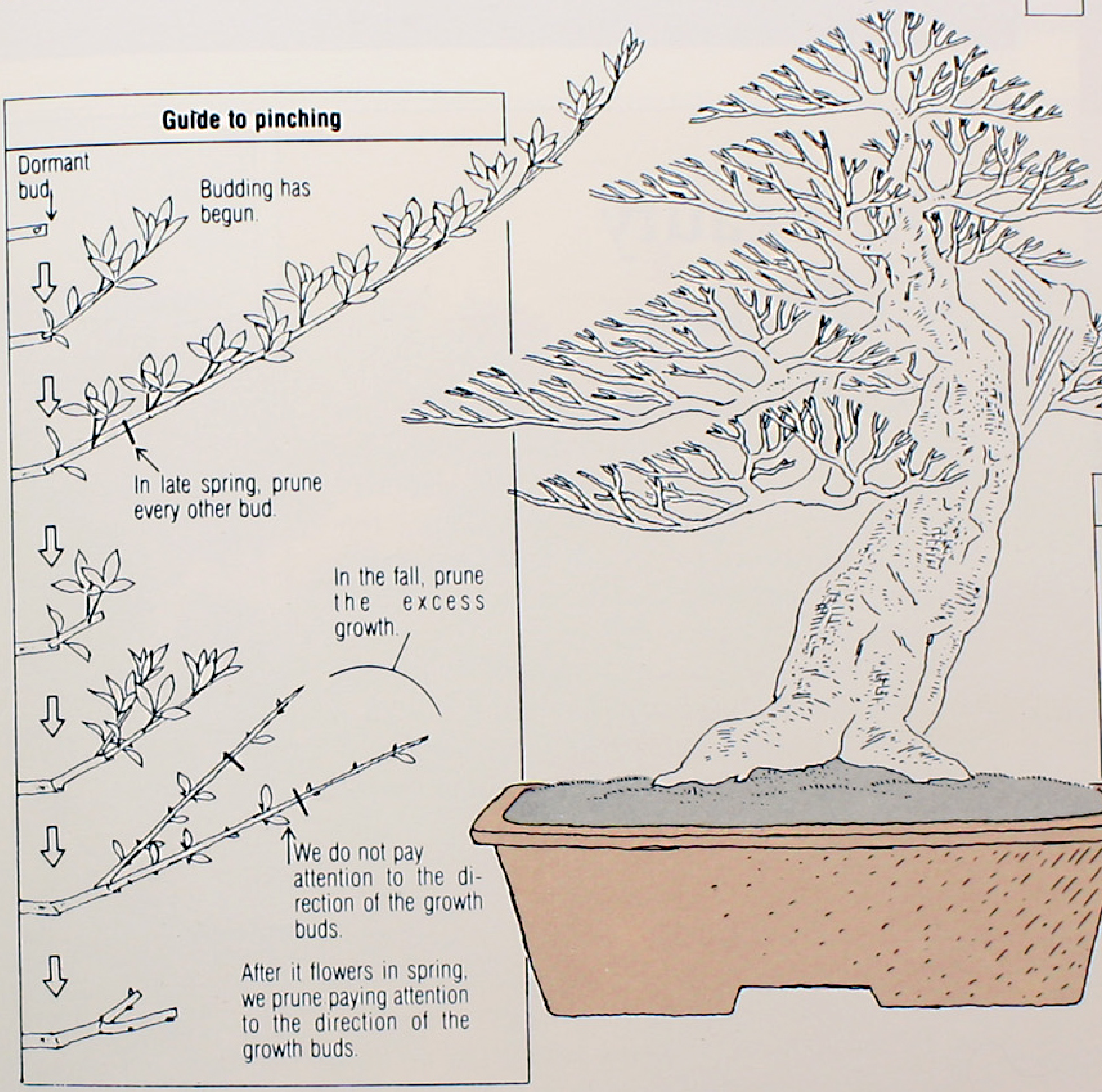
When the tree was transplanted once again, I chose a deeper container to try to give the roots more vigor so that the tree would have more strength to develop the needed ramification.

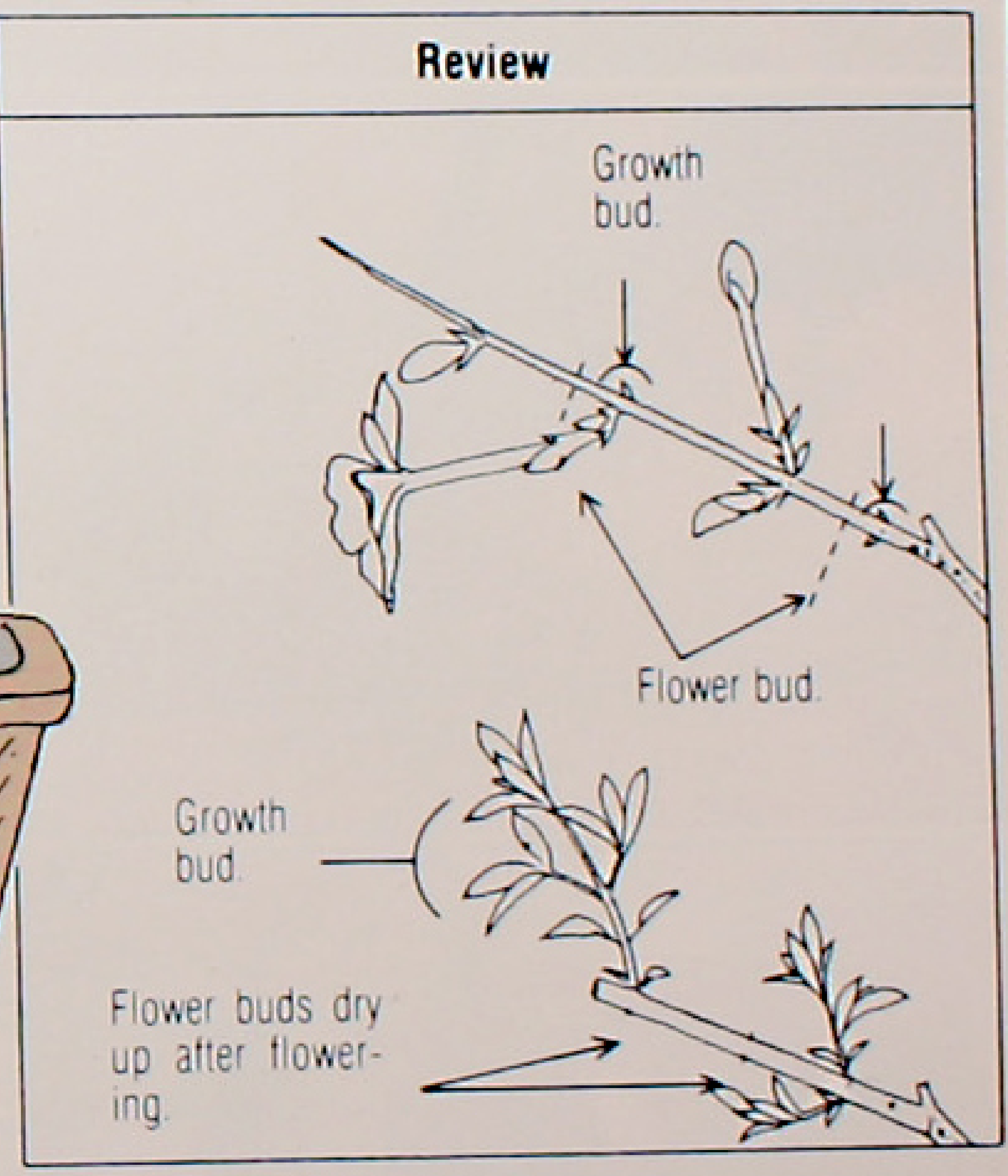
It was also time to refine the branch structure of the tree, wiring those zones that needed it or that could not be corrected through pruning alone.


I will have to care for it for many years.
All right! I'm sold!
You've got yourself a real bargain.
But, within ten years, I will have moved the furniture...
So, I better leave the tree like this.

This is the vision of the tree in the future; it will be achieved through successive repotting, appropriate pruning, and bud selection. Perhaps the scar will have to be extended later and treated so that it does not continue to rot.


Simple layering.
Rooted branch
Jasmine branches that have been buried tend to take root.
Early spring is the time for simple layering.
Take advantage of a long branch.
Two months after burying it, it will have sent out roots.


Guide to pinching
Dormant bud
Budding has begun.
In late spring, prune every other bud.
In the fall, prune the excess growth.
We do not pay attention to the direction of the growth buds.
After it flowers in spring, we prune paying attention to the direction of the growth buds.
Future of the Bonsai.
Tenth year

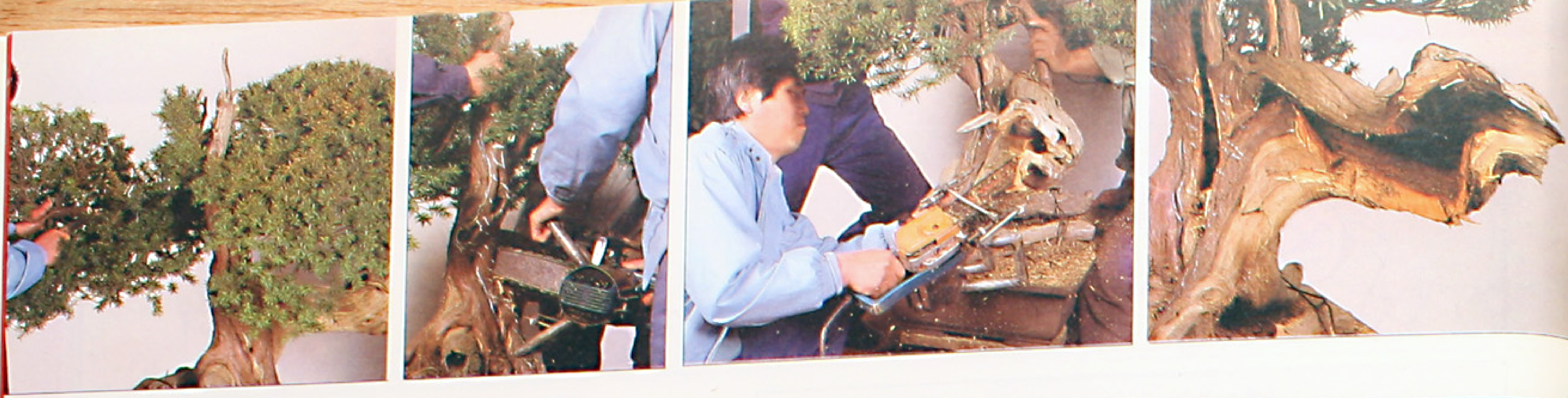

Review

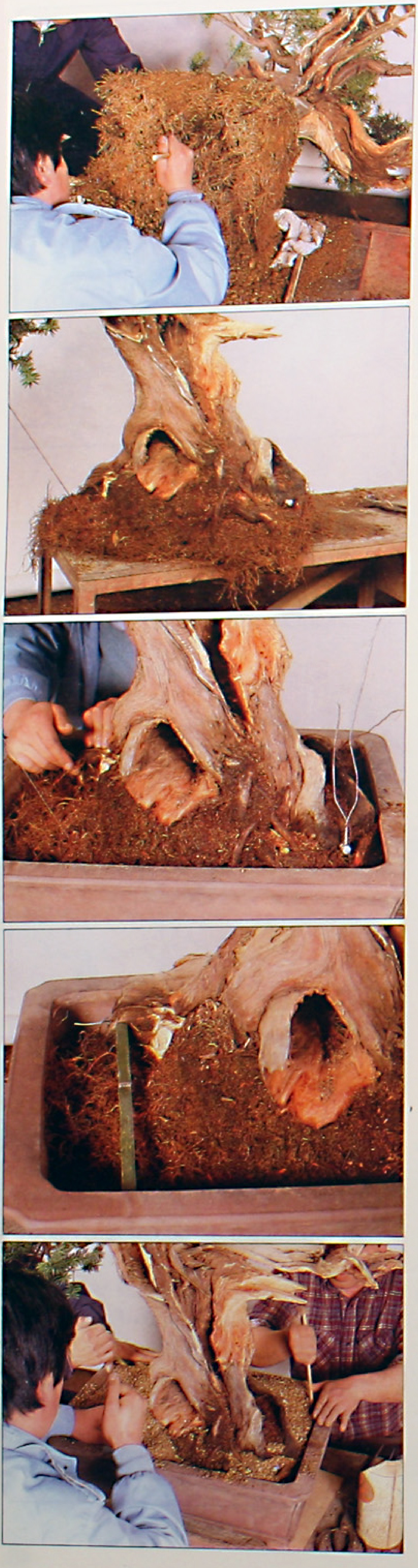
In this case, the main objective of wiring is the hanging branch on the left side of the tree. By inclining it slightly upwards and to the left, the curve that gives the tree character is emphasized.

The appropriate time to wire is in late spring, and the wire should be taken off within two months at the maximum, because otherwise the branch may wither and die. We only wire those branches that are sufficiently woody. The only useful way to shape young branches is through pruning, and by selectively removing buds.

To prune the young branches, we should keep in mind that leaves on the jasmine grow in pairs on opposite sides of the branch. This means that we should remove undesirable buds by hand and later cut the branch. In this way, we are sure of the ramification of alternating branches, allowing the passage of light to lower branches.

Frequently buds appear on old wood and even on the base of the trunk; these buds should be eliminated as soon as possible. It is desirable to direct all of the tree's energy into growth that is useful. Another characteristic of jasmine is its tendency to bud on the axil of branches that already exist; in that case, we should decide whether to leave the branch or the young bud.





In the photographs on these two pages (from left to right; then top to bottom), you can see the initial work of shaping and transplanting, which took from March 2 to 8. It includes the pruning of one of the two branches, a first touch of dead wood, accomplished with an electric saw, and repotting to the final container.

The beauty of silence

With the 1982 publication of the book, "The Magical Technician of Contemporary Bonsai," (in the Japanese Language) Masahiko Kimura suddenly burst onto the Western scene, immediately recognized for his extraordinary ability to transform ordinary Bonsai into spectacular works of art.

Mr. Kimura uses modern power tools and new techniques to accomplish in just a few months what formerly took many patient years of work and refinement - a pace that perhaps has greater appeal here in the West.

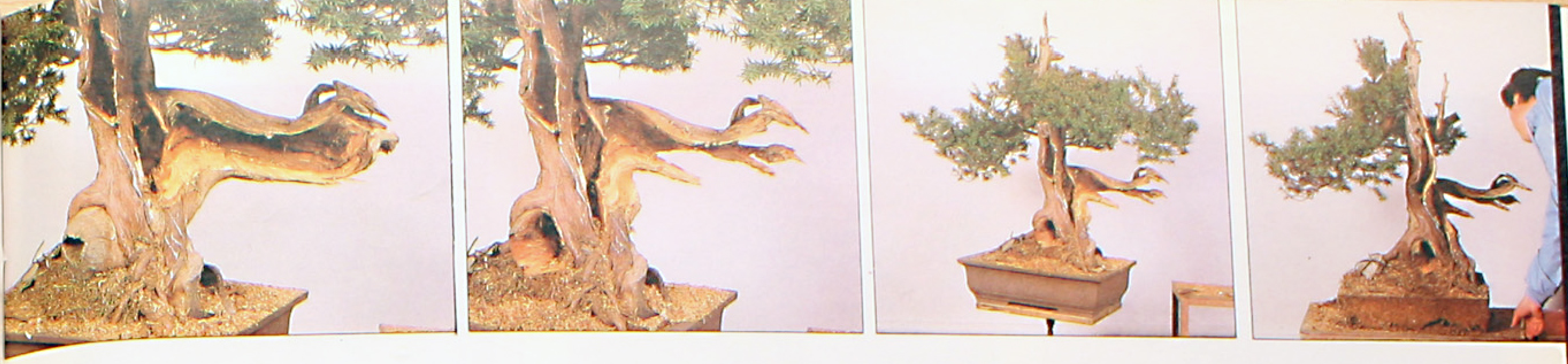
When he is asked about his techniques, he responds like another famous artist, the photographer Hamilton: technique is what is least important. If one is not capable of desiring with all one's strength to impress one's feelings on a material, the technique is not going to help one do it.

Our only comment after carefully reviewing the sequence of photographs in this and the upcoming articles on Mr. Kimura that will appear in "Bonsai Today" is: incredible!

•

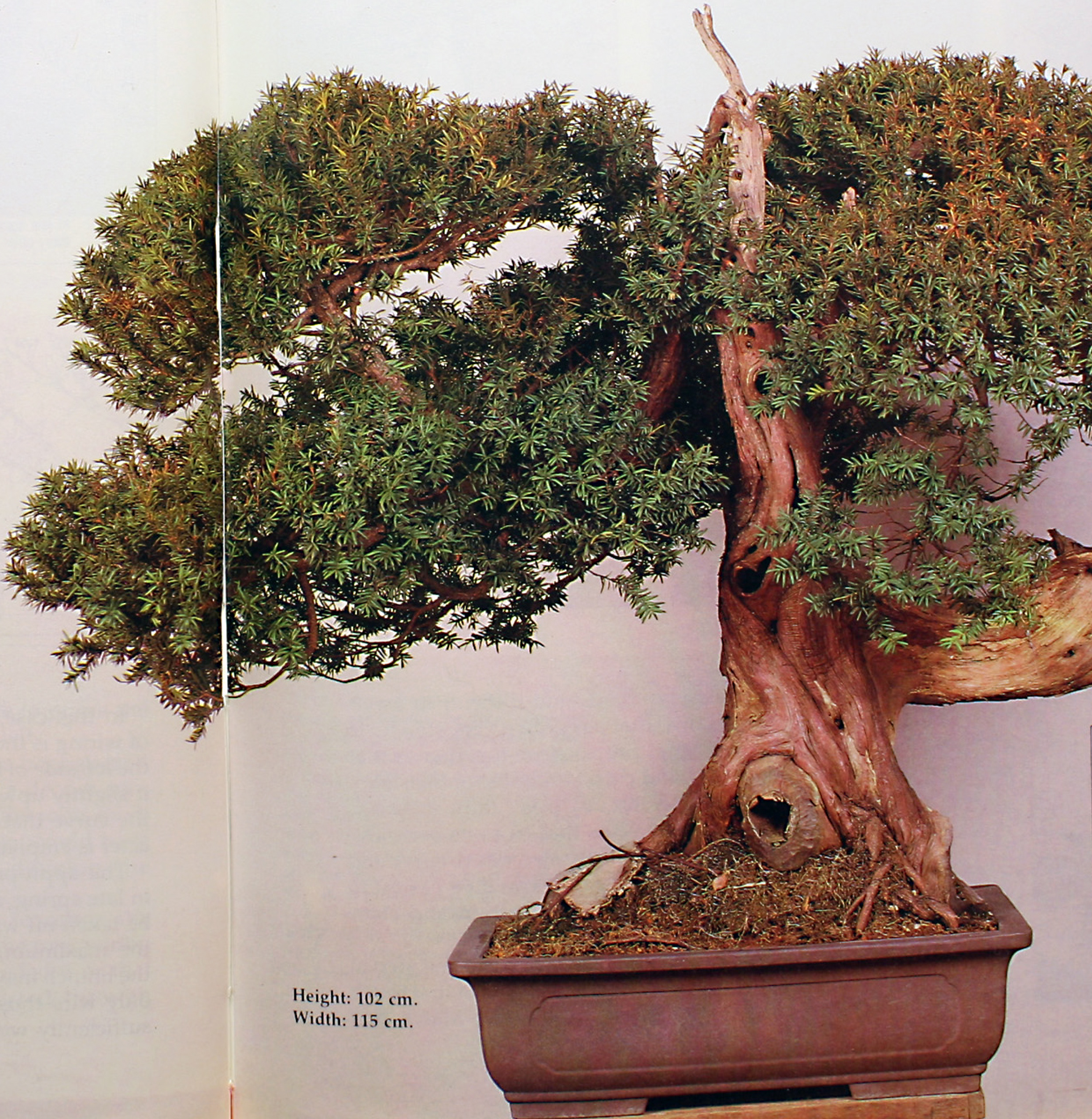
The tree I am styling is a taxus cuspidata (Sieb. & Zucc.) var. hilii native to northern Japan. It was probably originally collected from a natural site. Someone planted it in a garden and pruned it like a hedge. I acquired the tree one year ago, in the spring, and planted it in the pot in which it appears in the initial photograph.

The position of tree in the container was determined by the root structure, not by the shape of the trunk.



o to bottom), you can see rch 2 to 8. It includes the mplished with an electric

Masahiko Kimura



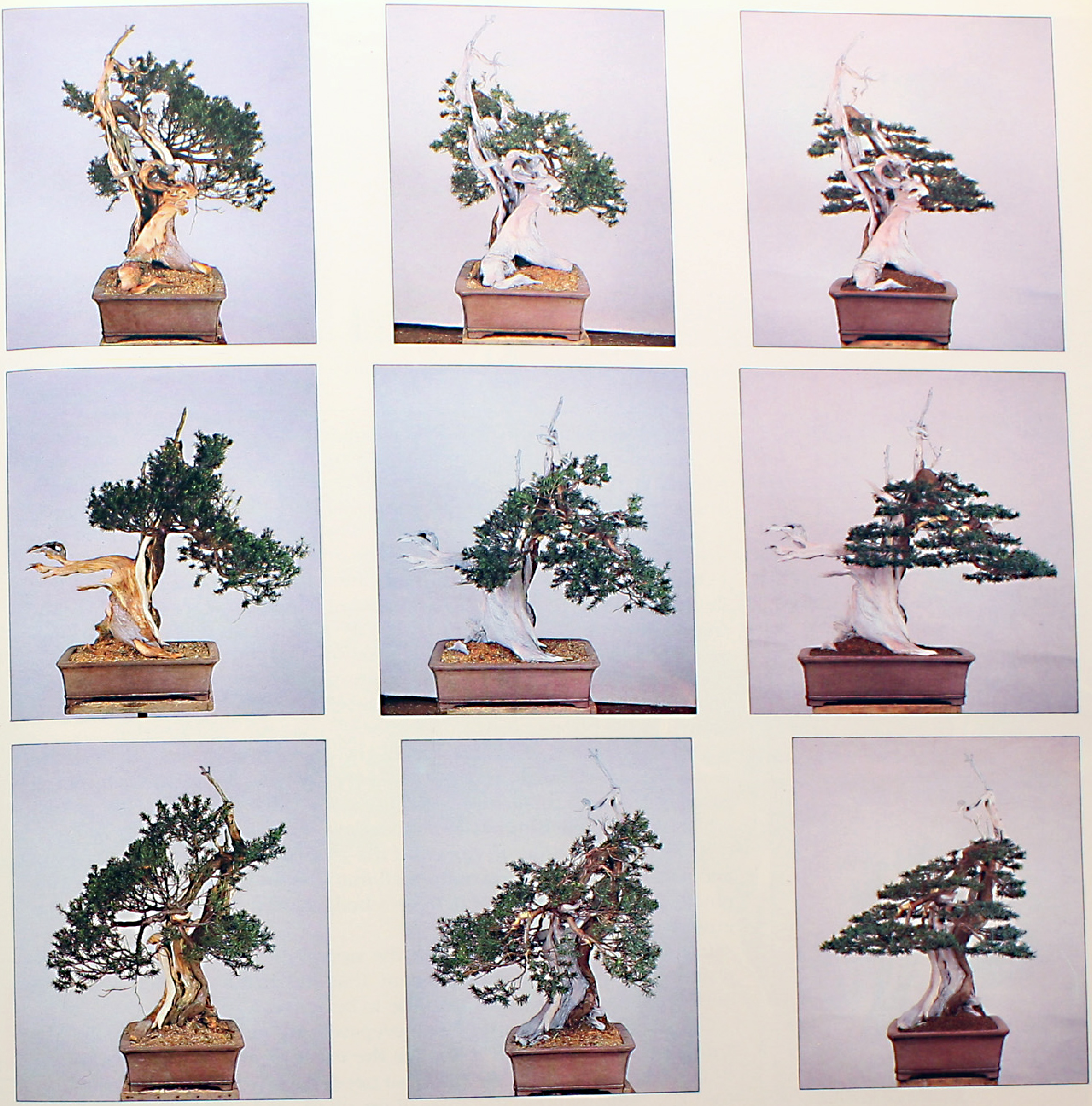
Height: 102 cm.
Width: 115 cm.

The master's touch is evident.

The wood of a yew is very hard, and difficult to carve, even more so with an old tree that has grown very slowly. In such a case, the growth rings are so close together that to sculpt it manually with a hand chisel is almost impossible.

Although I use power tools, for any tree I allow myself to be guided by the grooves and veins that cross its bark. Depending on how the wood ages, the trunk tends to curve and twist. This shows us the parts where it would be easiest to carve and also indicates the wood's inclination and character, which we should conserve.

I started working on this tree March 2, and the first step in its restyling, which includes creational pruning, a first touch of dead wood, and transplanting, concluded March 8. I



The photographic sequence on these pages shows the final shaping that took place on September 6. The top row show the progress, from left to right, on the right side of the tree. The middle row, on the back of the tree; and the bottom row, on the left side. Work done included pruning, the final sculpting of the dead wood, and the wiring and relocation of the masses of foliage on the tree.

An electric saw was used for the sculpting, as well as a power polisher as shown in the lower photograph on the previous page.

needed five days of work, which were completely captured on video.

The reshaping work was not very complicated. It was clear that with only two live branches growing on the upper part of the trunk, emerging at the same height, one of them had to be removed. In essence, it just consisted of the creation of focal points on the tree, and in eliminating the monolithic appearance of the branches that prevented the trunk from appearing attractive.

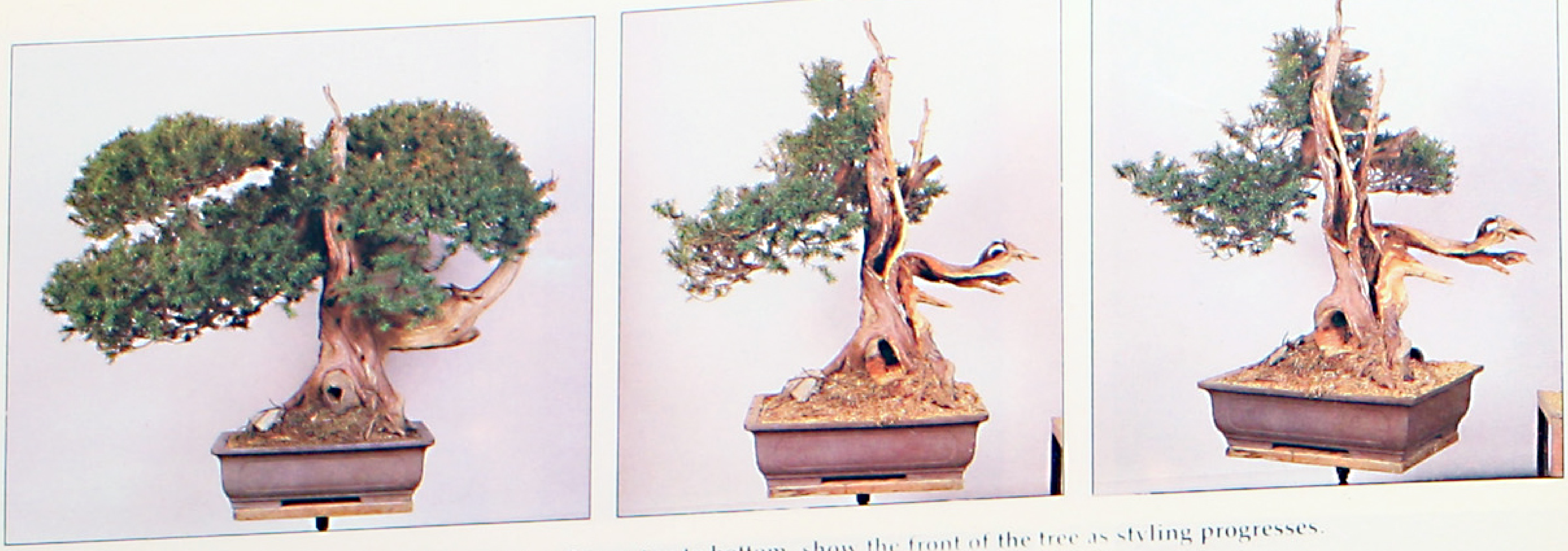
In choosing which of the upper two branches would need to be eliminated, I based my decision on the following:

— The trunk leans slightly towards the left.

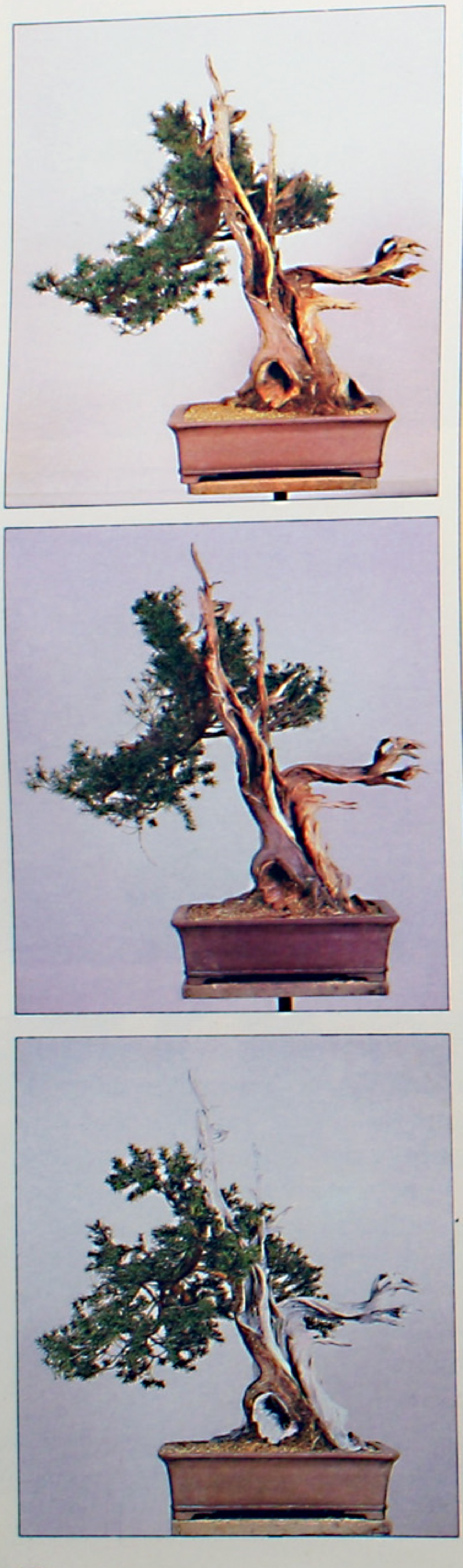
— The right branch grows upwards.

— The left branch falls downwards.

Clearly, the right branch should be eliminated. In this way, the line of



The photographs on this page, from left to right and from top to bottom, show the front of the tree as styling progresses.



the trunk is in harmony the descending left branch.

Next, the dead branch on the lower right part, in the form of a horn, should be corrected, cut and sculpted to add interest to that part of the trunk that would not have any live growth on it.

Once the design of the tree was outlined, I transplanted it into a new container, changing the position of the original planting.

Now the trunk is slightly more inclined to the left and turned to that side a little, too. This operation was possible because the right side of the tree no longer had any live growth, so the roots on that side were no longer useful; most of the two thirds of the original root ball that I removed were from that side. Of course, to prepare for the next step, the final shaping and sculpting, I anchored the Bonsai firmly to the pot just as shown in the photographs.

On September 6, I decided to begin the definitive sculpting of the wood. The indications that the tree was ready were the vigorous budding produced after transplanting and the perfect functioning of the roots, which were demanding water almost daily.

At any rate, in order to carry out the intensive stripping of the trunk, and so that the tree would endure all that loss of moisture, I pruned and pinched the apex (still as if it were a hedge) very frequently during the growing season.

In addition, one month before the operation I prepared the tree by watering it sparingly, which meant that the trunk was left with the minimum sap necessary to continue to be active.

Once the tree was ready, I also prepared my mind and my tools. My mind needed two days to visualize the exact form to which the Bonsai should be transformed. My tools just needed a few hours of sharpening.

At last, little by little, the areas of jin, shari, and sabamiki began to interlace and cross those of the live wood. The most delicate work was accomplished very rapidly: in just four hours, the sculpting of the dead wood was finished.

Then, the details: the foliage was brought into a cascade through wiring and pruning, creating distinct layers of green and, at the same time, taking advantage of the fact that the yew, with few branches, has much visual volume. So, on the one hand , I created the falling branch, and, on the other, I made the green foliage contrast from behind the tree with the white wood in front.

With my work done at last, a spectacular Bonsai was born.

Masahiko Kimura

Outstanding American Bonsai

RANDY T. CLARK

Editors Note: Randy Clark of Minneapolis is the author of a soon to be published book featuring the works of 50 American bonsai artists. We asked Randy if we could publish a few of the photographs from the book along with his commentary on how the whole thing came about for this initial issue of BONSAI TODAY. His response follows.

In the summer of 1985 I was busily involved with my local bonsai society planning a Bonsai Clubs International convention to be held in Minneapolis during July of 1987.

The amount of time and energy expended in the production of one of these conventions is a great deal more than most people might imagine. Additionally, the Minnesota Bonsai Society, hosts for the convention were determined to plan an extra special convention and to show delegates the best side of bonsai in Minnesota.

To accomplish this, the Society embarked upon an ambitious plan which began three years in advance with monthly committee meetings, gradually accelerating into weekly and finally almost daily meetings as the convention deadline approached.

As a part of their plan the Society had made arrangements with the National Bonsai Foundation to produce an exhibit of bonsai by outstanding American artists. As the exhibit progressed, it occurred to me that it would mark the first time an exhibit of such high quality bonsai, representing an almost complete cross section of the United States, had ever been produced.

As one might imagine the logistics and cost of transporting valuable bonsai across the American continent were considerable. I realized it would be a unique photographic opportunity and asked Chicago bonsaist and photographer Peter Voynovich to photograph the trees on exhibit.

Peter gladly agreed and shortly thereafter I developed the idea for the book. If horticultural background information could be obtained on each tree and biographical information obtained on each artist, the pictures and text could form the basis for a truly unique bonsai publication.

I approached several companies with my idea and finally selected Timber Press in Portland, Oregon as the publisher. Following the close of what finally did prove to be a very successful convention, I set about the task of writing and editing the book.

It was a task I had assured Timber Press would take no more than two months. A year and a half later, I was still trying to edit the manuscript and get it into the hands of the publisher.

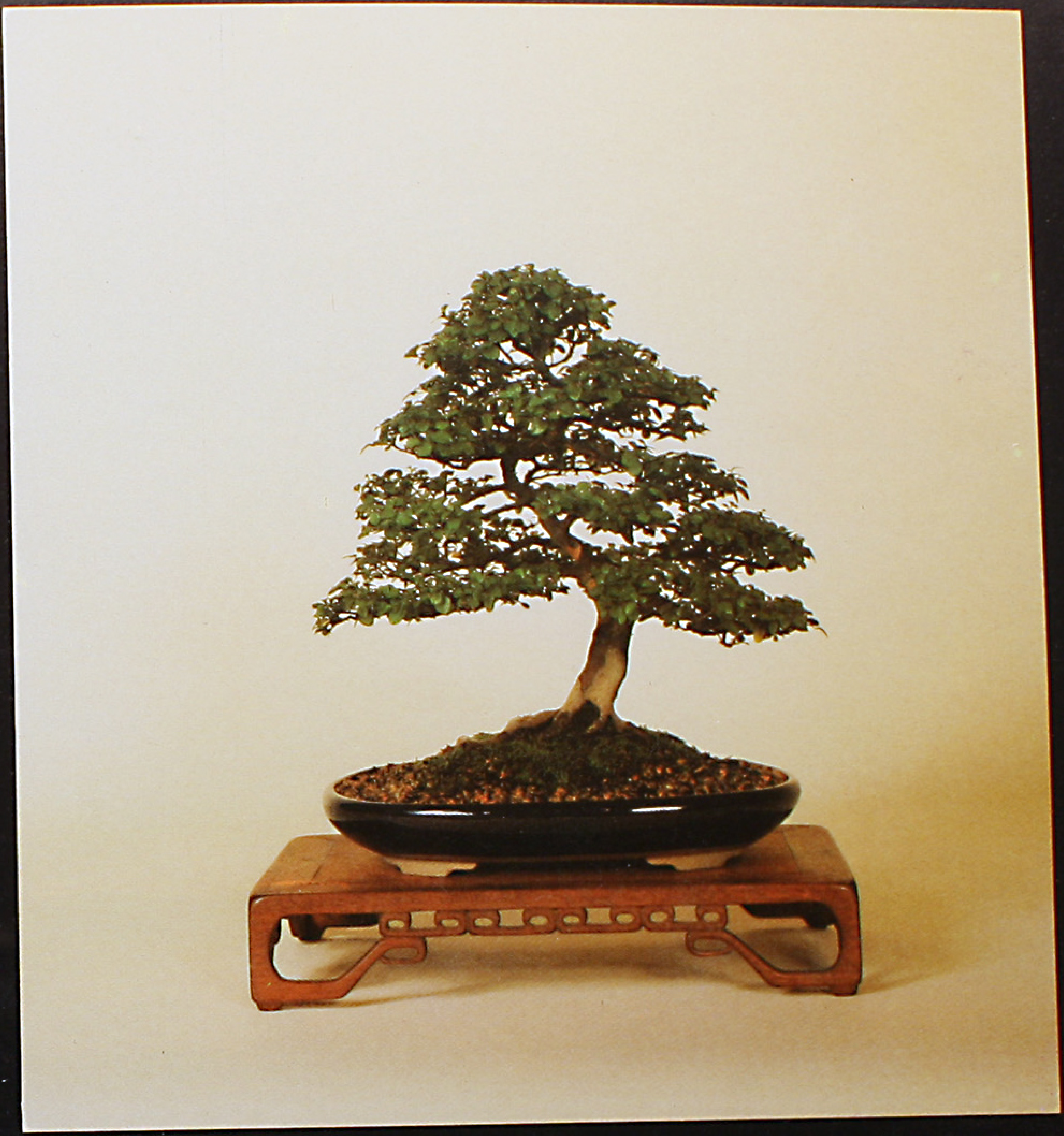
Outstanding American Bonsai was eventually finished, (or as finished as it is ever apt to get), and Timber Press anticipates having the book available in the marketplace sometime around July of 1989.

We did not use photographs of all the trees in the Foundation exhibit, and we added a few more along the way which we felt were particularly good examples of the art. The final manuscript became a compendium of 50 American bonsai artists who are particularly good at what they do.

At its heart, the book is not really about the Foundation exhibit so much as about bonsai in America and about how we, as Americans have adopted this very special art form and are trying to make it our own. I am grateful to the fifty artists who agreed to let me use the photos of their plants, and for the cooperation of the National Bonsai Foundation, Bonsai Clubs International, the Minnesota Bonsai Society and especially Peter for his images.

I have selected several of Peter's excellent photos to include along with an edited version of their respective scenarios in the book. They are typical of what will someday soon be available for all to enjoy.

The book was designed, not to teach, but to inspire, and to show that bonsai is no longer just a Japanese art, but an American experience as well. That experience is taking place coast to coast and from Canada to the Gulf. I think it is also a testimony to our teachers on that small island half a world away that we are good students and have been paying close attention.

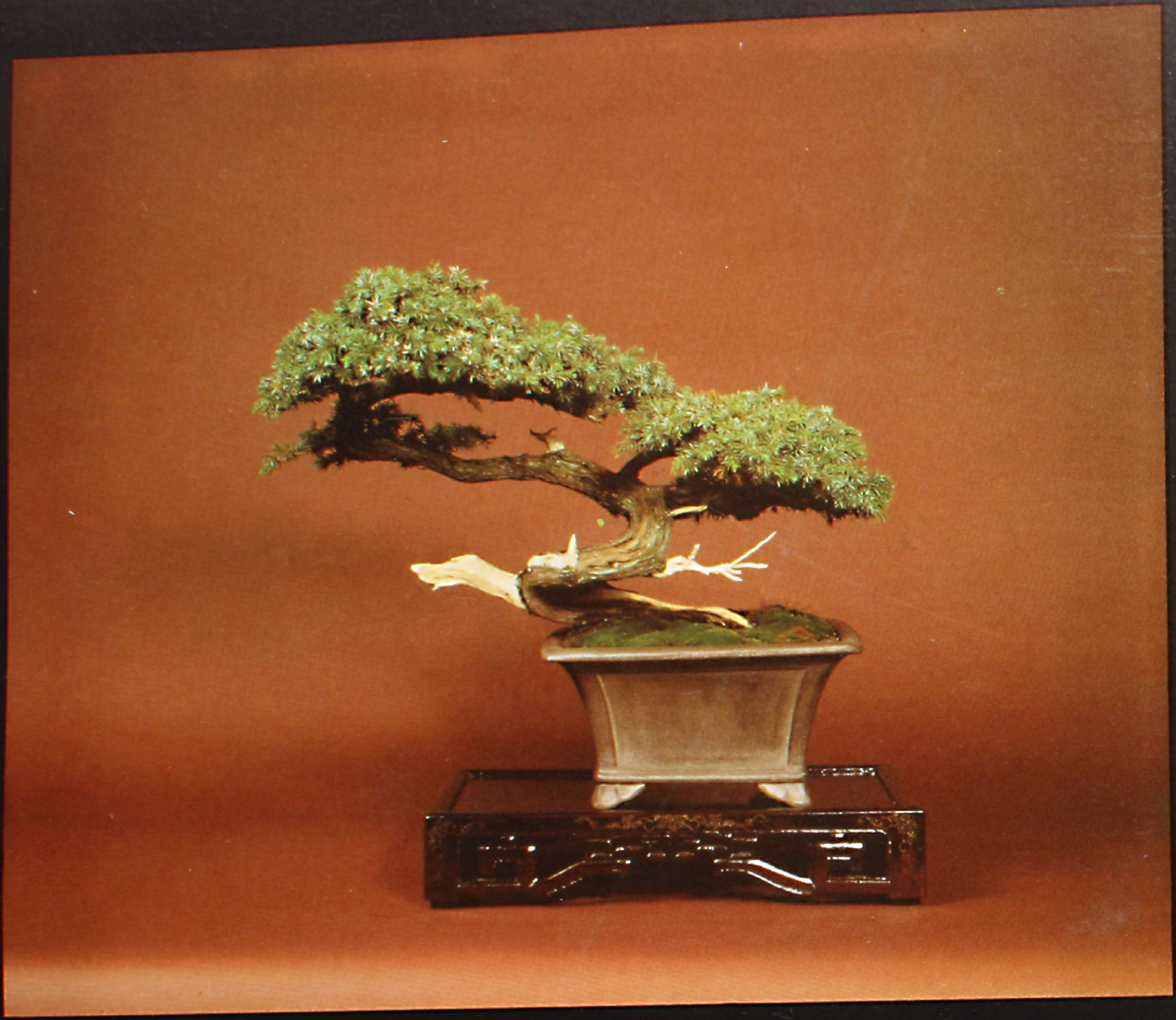


Chinese Sweet Plum
Sageretia theezans

Artist: William M. Clark, M.D.
Tennessee

It is unusual to find a Chinese sweet plum which exhibits the overall excellence which can be seen in this fine, 10 year old, specimen. Its outstanding trunk taper and remarkably balanced root buttress are enhanced by the careful attention the artist has given to branch placement, balance and overall shape.

This masterpiece bonsai stands 13 inches high and is planted in a shallow, blue glazed oval which accents the unique, two-toned coloring of the bark. The plant was purchased as a cutting 10 years ago and for the first 5 years was grown in the ground during summer months and potted each fall for storage in a greenhouse. Rough styling was accomplished during this time. It has been container grown for the past 5 years to permit detail styling. The wooden stand upon which the bonsai sits was handmade by the artist.

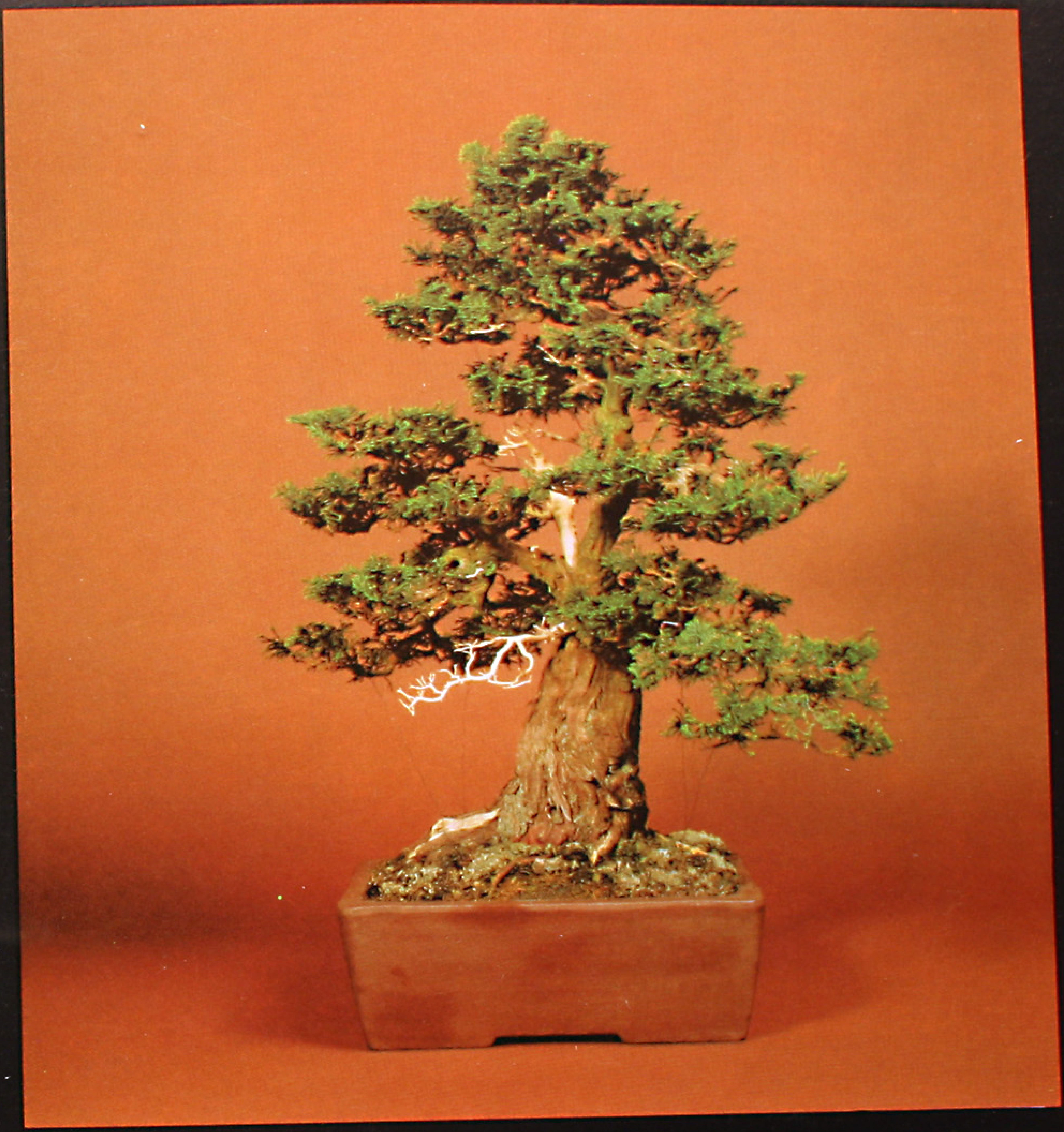


Common pasture juniper
Juniperus communis 'Depressa'

Artist: Jack B. Douthitt
Wisconsin

This excellent, slanting style bonsai was designed from material collected in 1979. It is estimated to be 80 years old and has been in training for 6 years. The bonsai stands 21 inches high and is planted in a 12 inch square by 6 inch deep container with a textured gray finish.

Although this species of juniper grows wild throughout much of North America, this specimen is particularly outstanding and received the Best of Show award at the 1985 Mid America Bonsai Exhibit in Chicago.

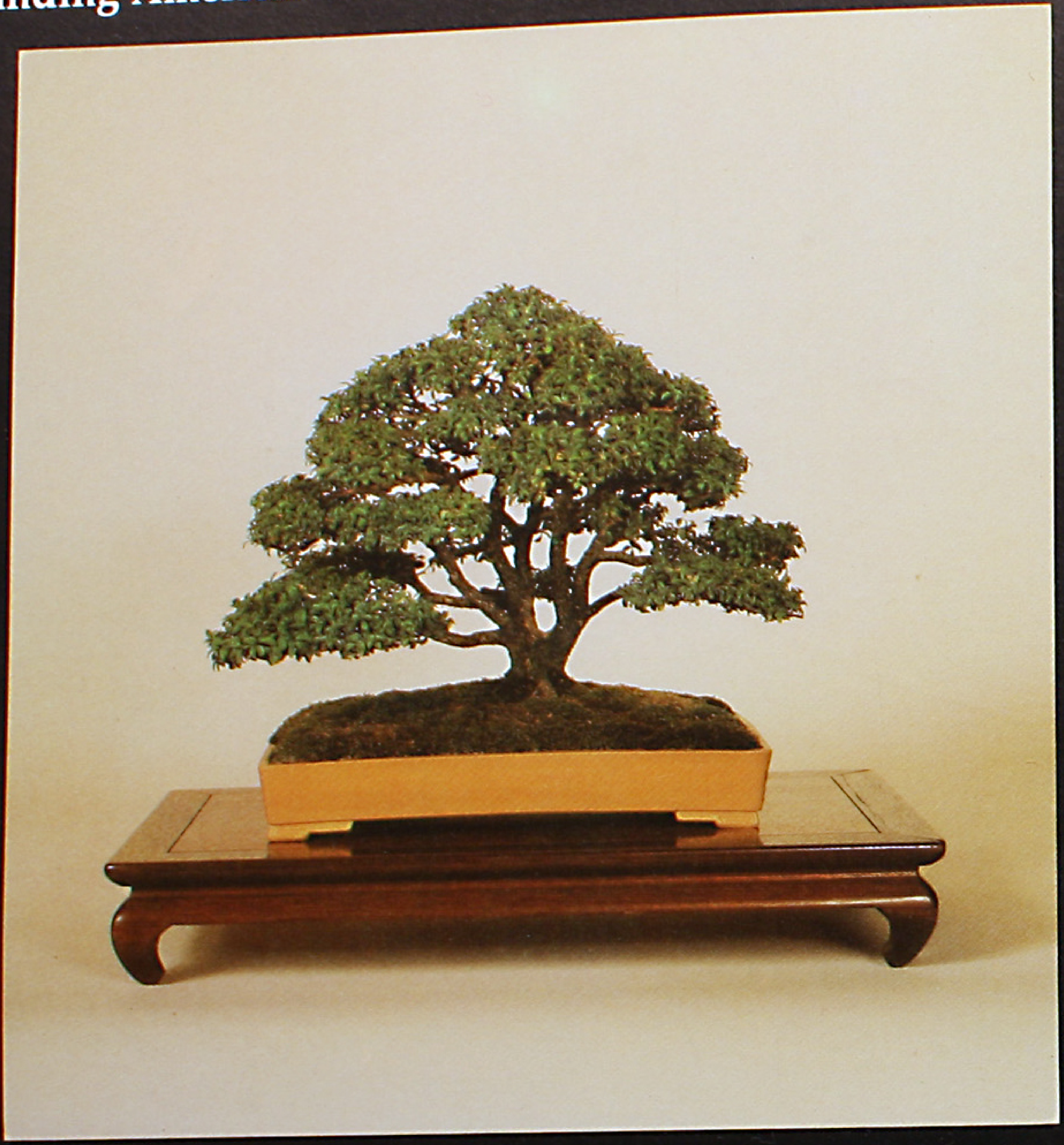


Dwarf Hinoki Cypress
Chamaecyparis obtusa 'Nana'

Artist: Daniel Robinson
Washington

This Hinoki was imported from Japan in 1915 with several others. They were mature nursery specimens, but not trained as bonsai, because the importer wished to keep them for propagation. They were planted in the ground and cuttings were taken for nearly 50 years.

In 1961 the artist purchased this specimen and began training it. The tree is a remarkable informal upright bonsai which exhibits a massive root buttress and dramatic trunk taper. The creative use of dead wood, jin and shari on this tree are a trademark of the artist and contribute greatly to the bonsai's overall feeling of strength and age. The tree stands 26 inches high and is planted in a 12 x 9 rectangular container. The Hinoki is estimated to be approximately 85 years old. It is without doubt, one of the finest bonsai of this type in The U.S.

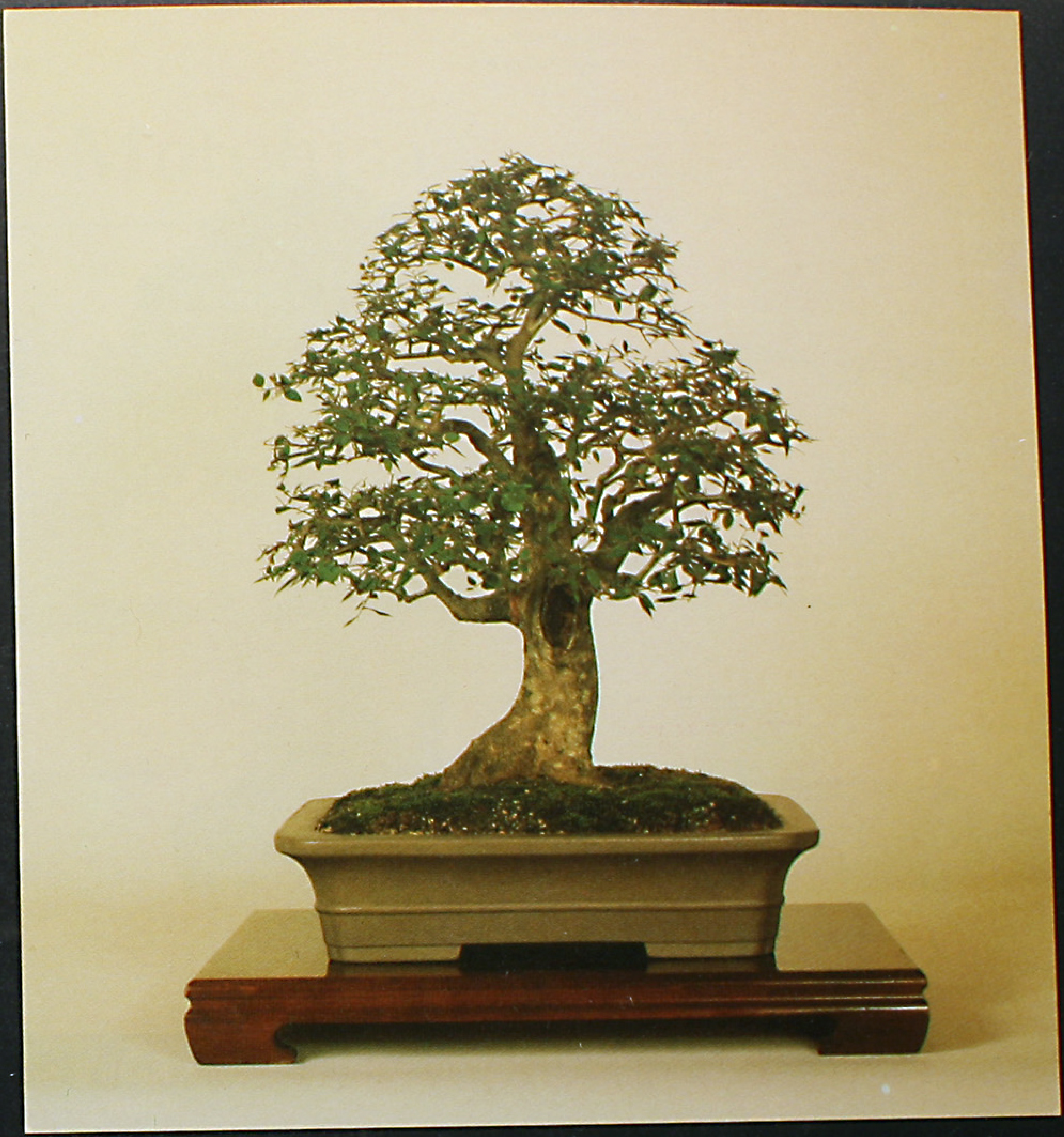


Kingsville Boxwood
Buxus microphylla 'Kingsville'

Artist: Ivan Watters
Illinois

This outstanding bonsai was purchased as uncut nursery stock in a 5 gallon growing pot in 1977. It was originally styled in a workshop with bonsai master Keith Scott and in 1980 transferred into its first formal bonsai container. The tree's present rectangular container is made of an unusual yellow clay and was acquired three years ago.

Although the artist describes the tree as an informal upright, it could also be classified as a multiple trunk bonsai and as such, is an excellent example. It is difficult to get Kingsvilles to develop effective layering of branches without creating a "pom pom" effect. This bonsai has accomplished that layering effect well and is reminiscent of the apple, and pear orchards from which we used to "snitch" fruit as a child. The planting is estimated to be 65 years old and has been in training for 10 years. It stands 15 inches high and is 14 inches wide.

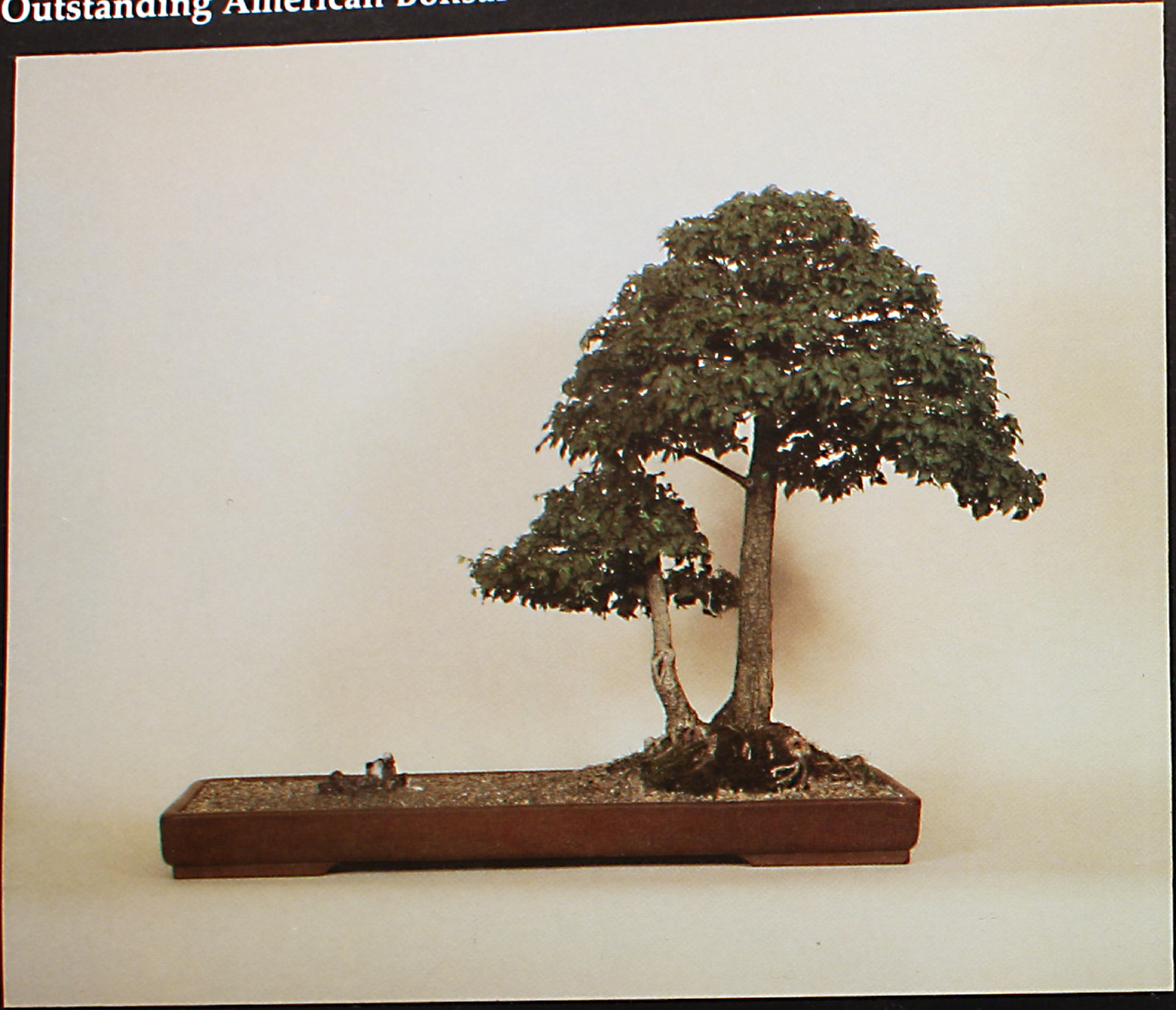


Water Elm
Planera aquatica

Artist: Vaughn L. Banting
Louisiana

This informal upright bonsai was collected from the flood plain of Lake Catahoula in central Louisiana in 1983. It was cut back from a height of 30 inches to about 10 inches and the present fine branch structure was developed in just four growing seasons.

The bonsai is estimated to be 25 to 50 years old and has been in training for 4 years. It stands 18 inches high and is planted in a rectangular gray container of Japanese manufacture. The tree displays an excellent root buttress and gradual trunk taper. In addition to its small leaves and interesting bark pattern, this species of tree is particularly desirable as a bonsai because it tends to develop fine branch ramification in a relatively short period of time.



Smooth Leaf Elm
Ulmus carpinifolia

Artist: Keith B. Scott
Ohio

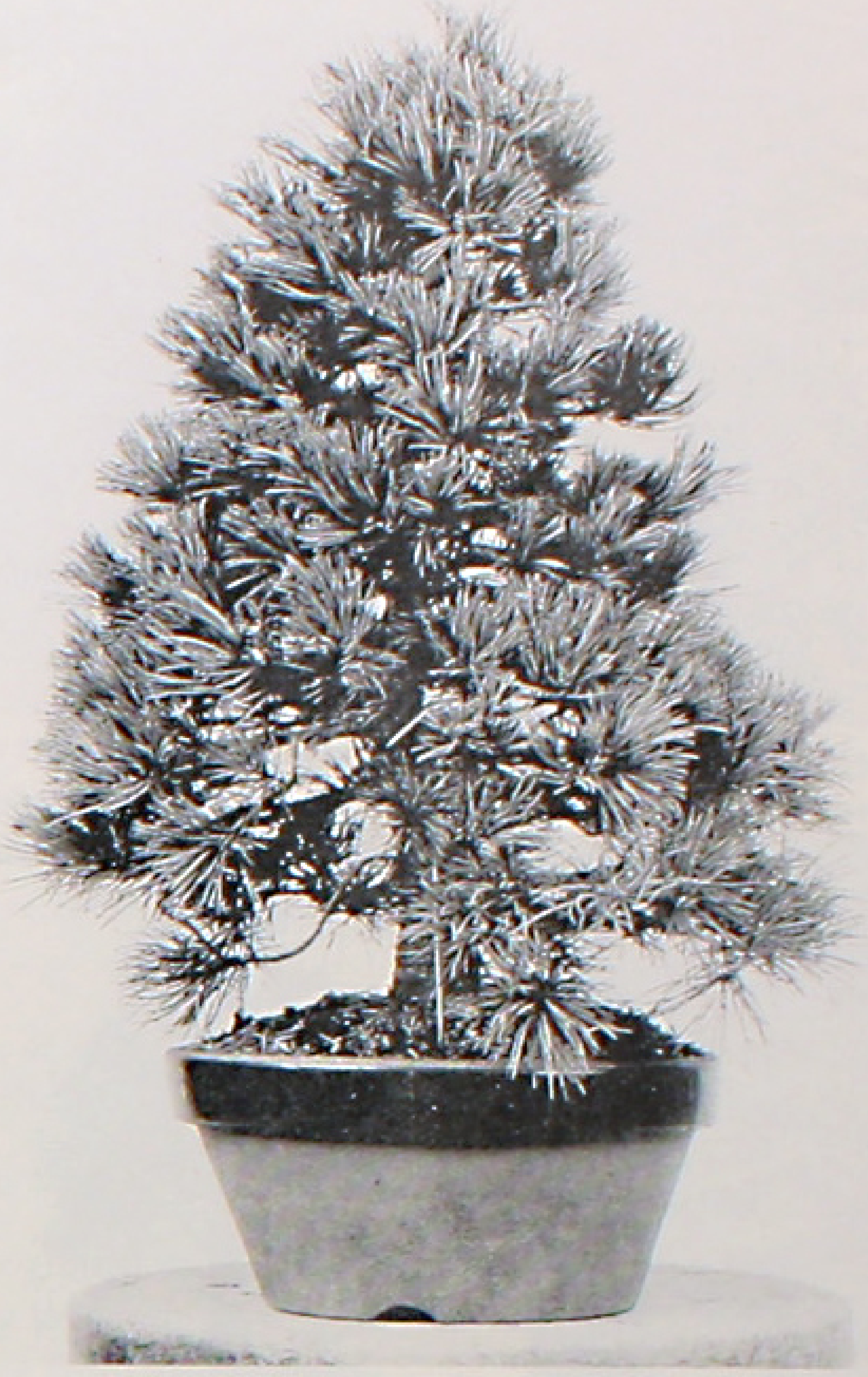
This informal upright bonsai is an excellent example of the twin trunk style often referred to as "parent and child." Originally owned by Toshio Kawamoto, the container is 2 inches deep and 28 inches long and is from the Yama Aki Kilns in Japan.

The artist's decision to position the bonsai at the extreme right of the container, counter balanced with a small stone positioned just to the left of center, creates a dramatic and exciting effect that would have been impossible to achieve had the bonsai been planted in a more traditional manner. The tree's light gray bark contrasts pleasantly with its dark green foliage. In addition, it displays an excellent root buttress and fine twigging and branch ramification which indicate years of careful attention by the owner. The tree is 15 years old and was collected from the Chagrin River Valley in Ohio. It has been in training as a bonsai for the past 7 years and stands 28 inches high.

In the studio of the masters

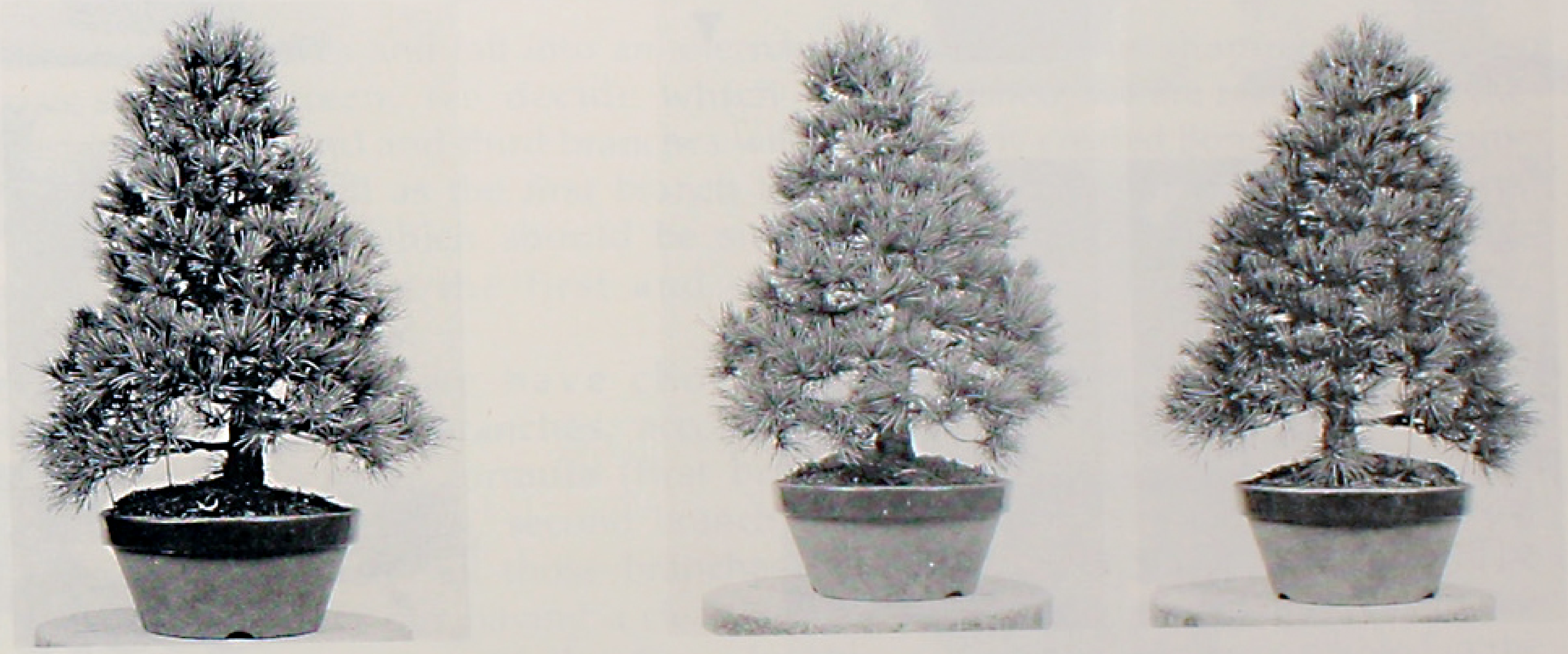
Itoo Motohisa

This photograph ▶ shows the front of the tree with the apex leaning forward toward the viewer.



◀ The author observing the ramification of the future Bonsai.

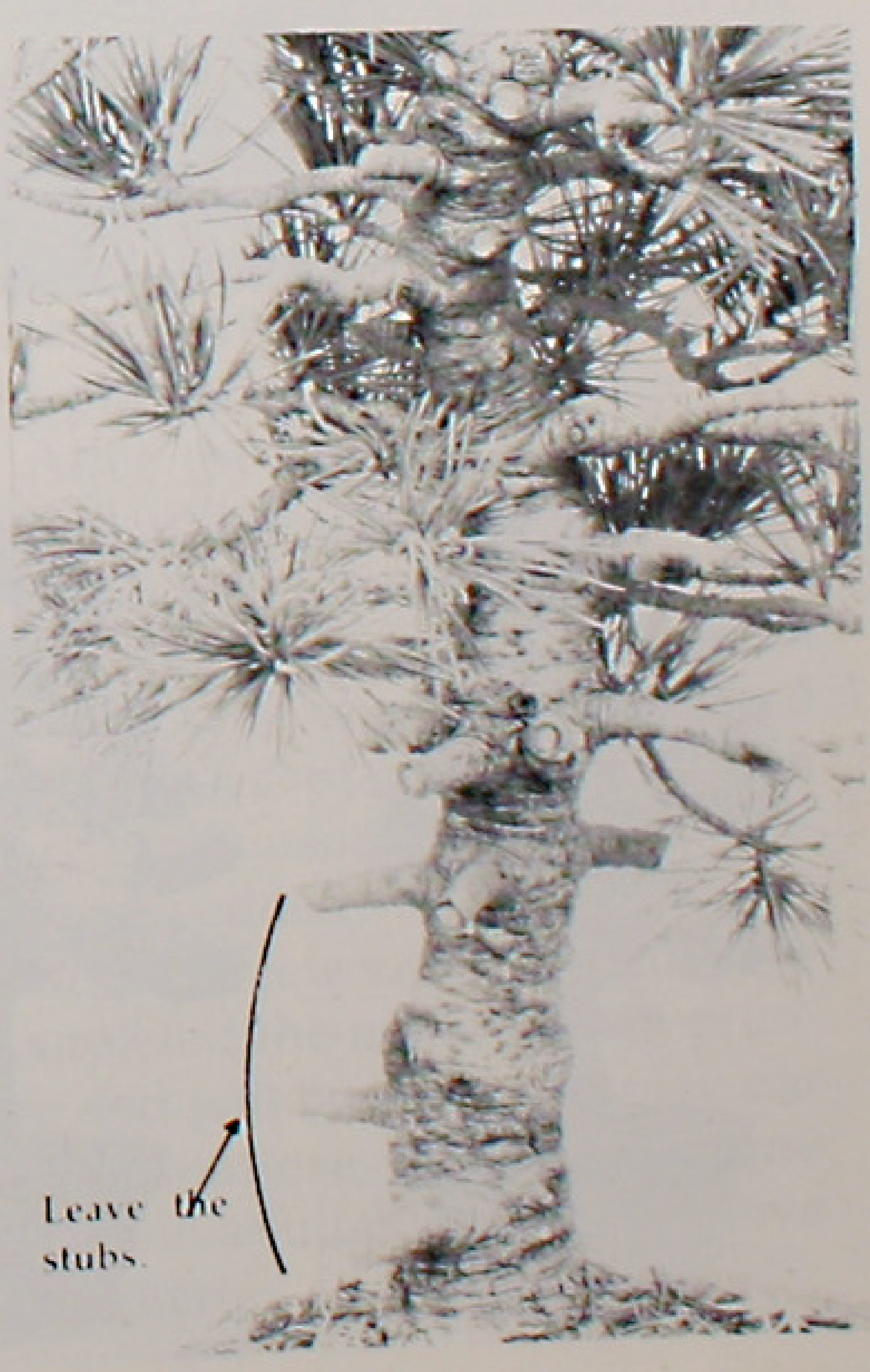
From left to right: view ▶ from the back, view from the right, view from the left.



In this article, the initial work of shaping and defining the style of a Japanese five-needle pine, Pinus parviflora will be demonstrated. The tree is 15 years old grown from seed and cultivated like any tree in a container, without pruning or cutting back.

The first step before shaping a tree is to open your mind to the character the tree already possesses. We should not start work with predetermined ideas, wanting to impose a style, before we are familiar with the possibilities of the material with which we are about to work.

In the art of Bonsai, man works with the tree, selecting a style which complements the basic line and form that nature has already established.



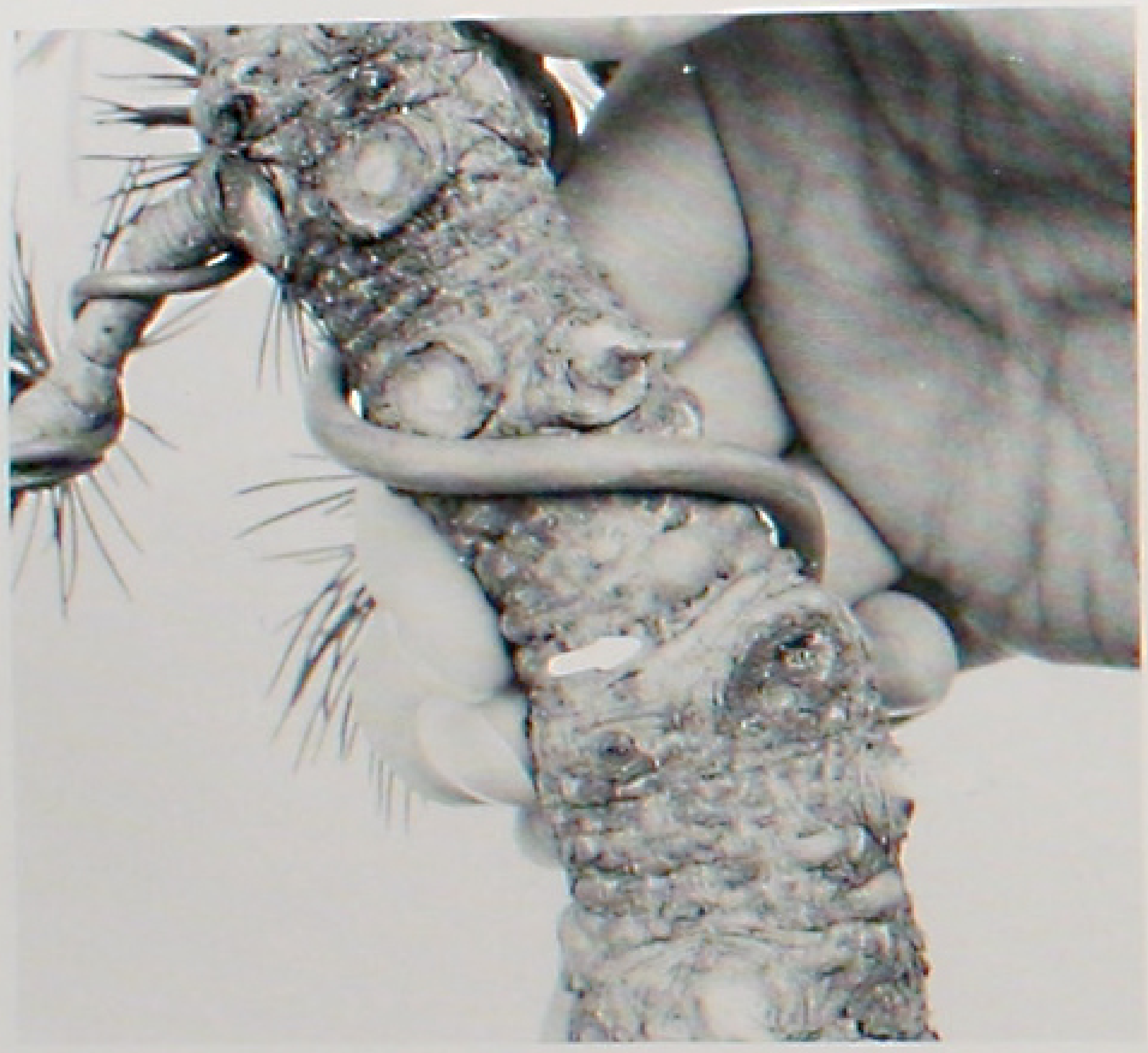
◀ Back view.

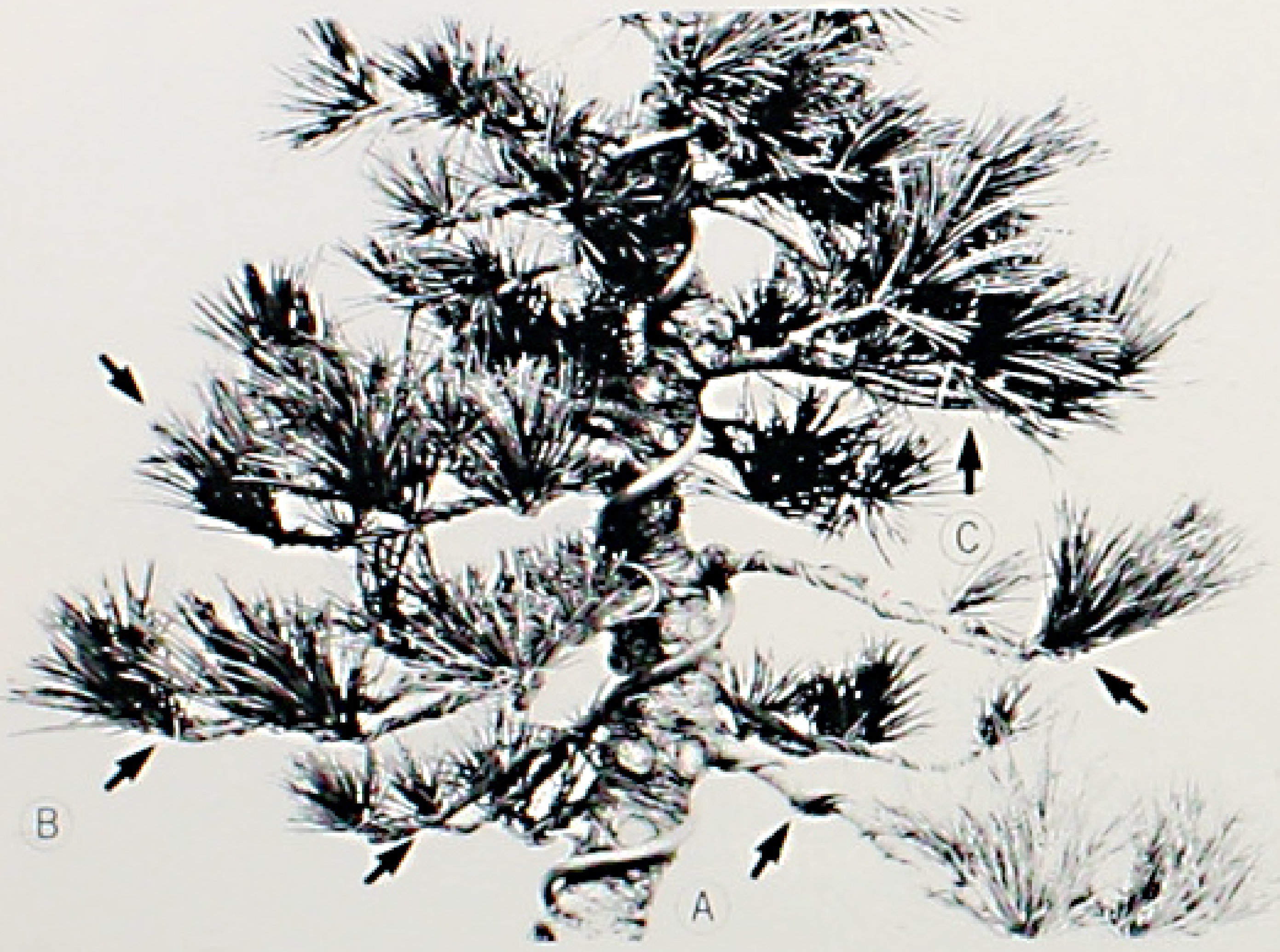
Front view. ▶

◀ Right side view.

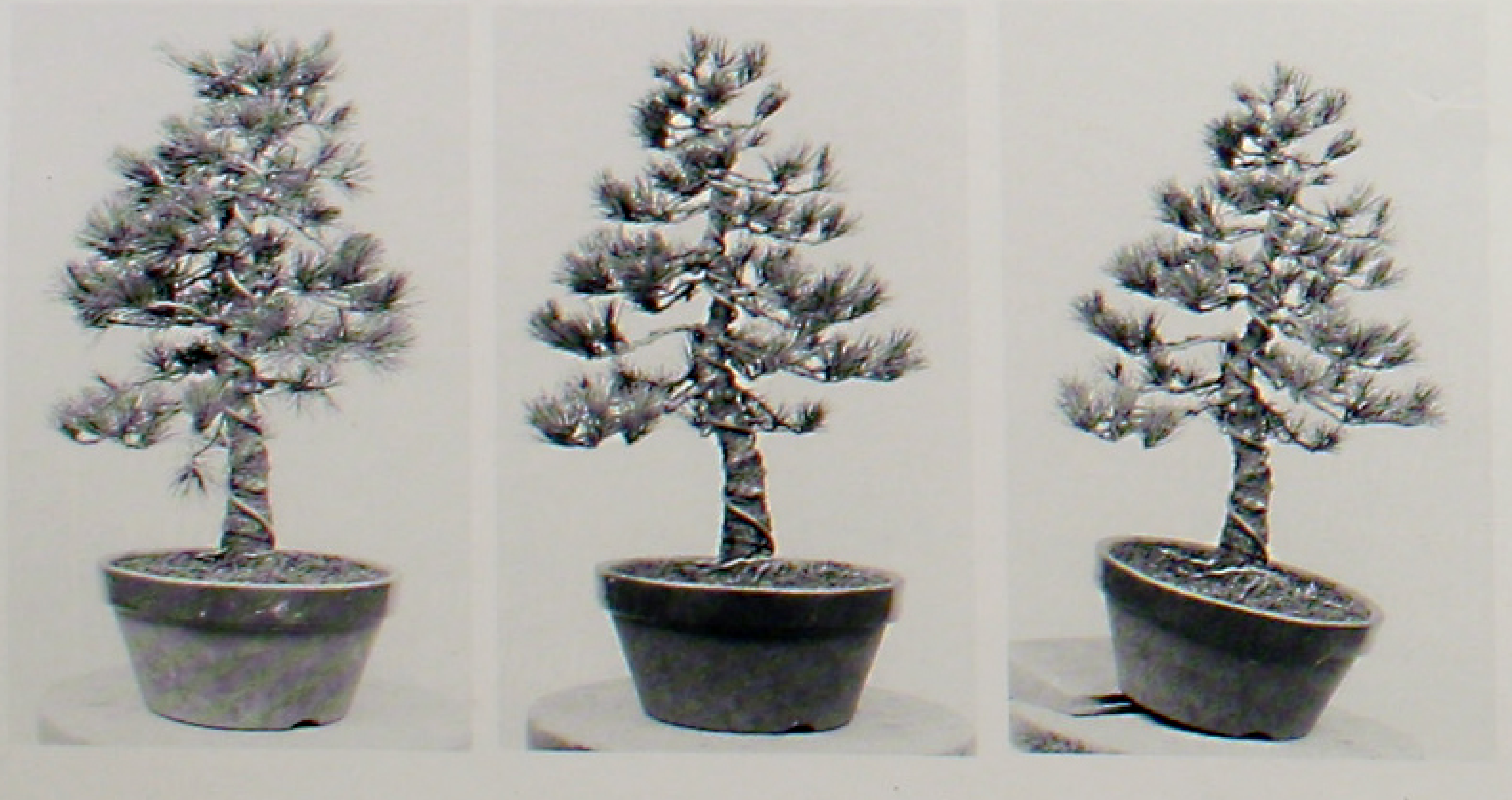
Left side view. ▶

Once wired, we proceed to accentuate the curves to emphasize the tree's character.
▼

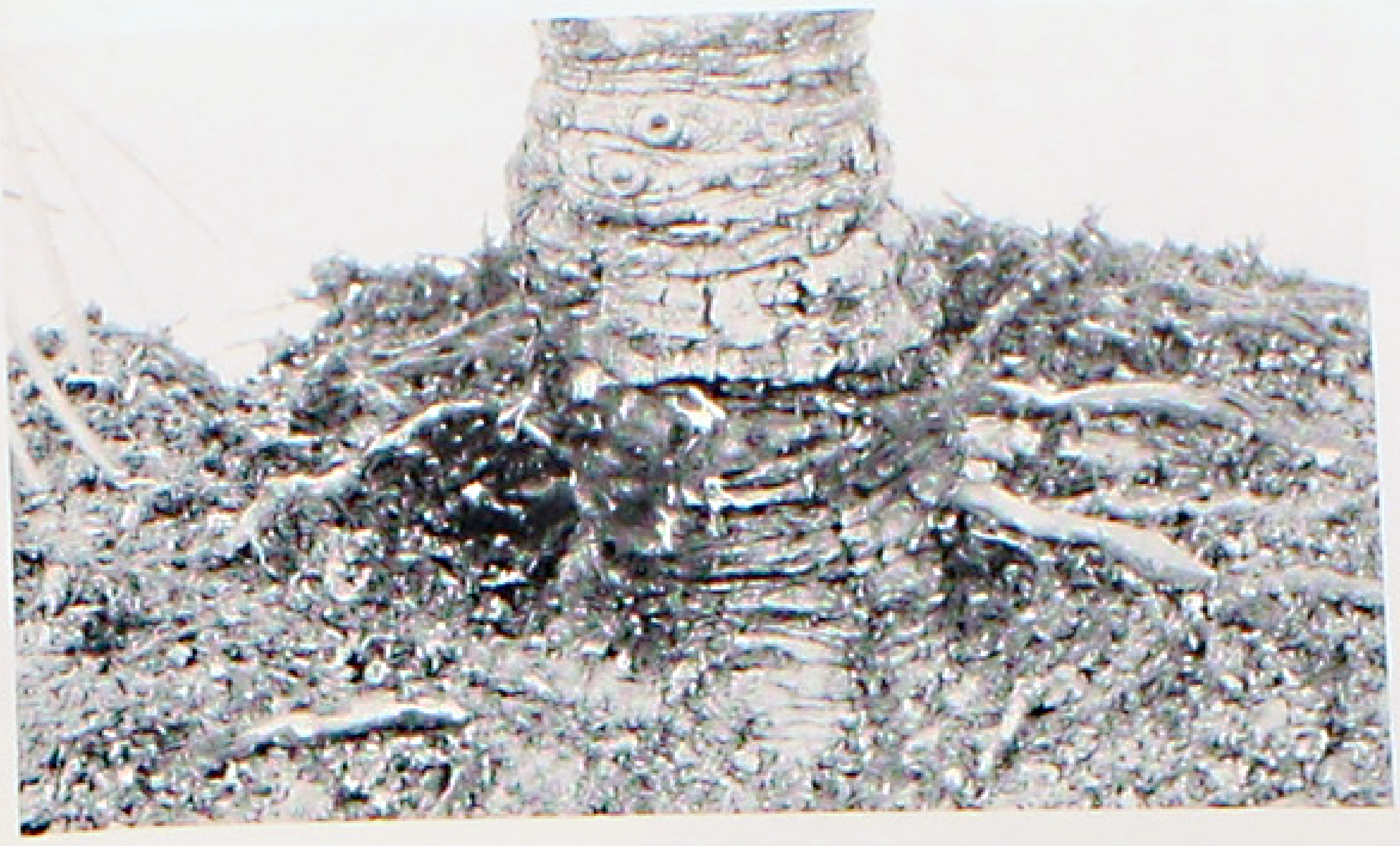


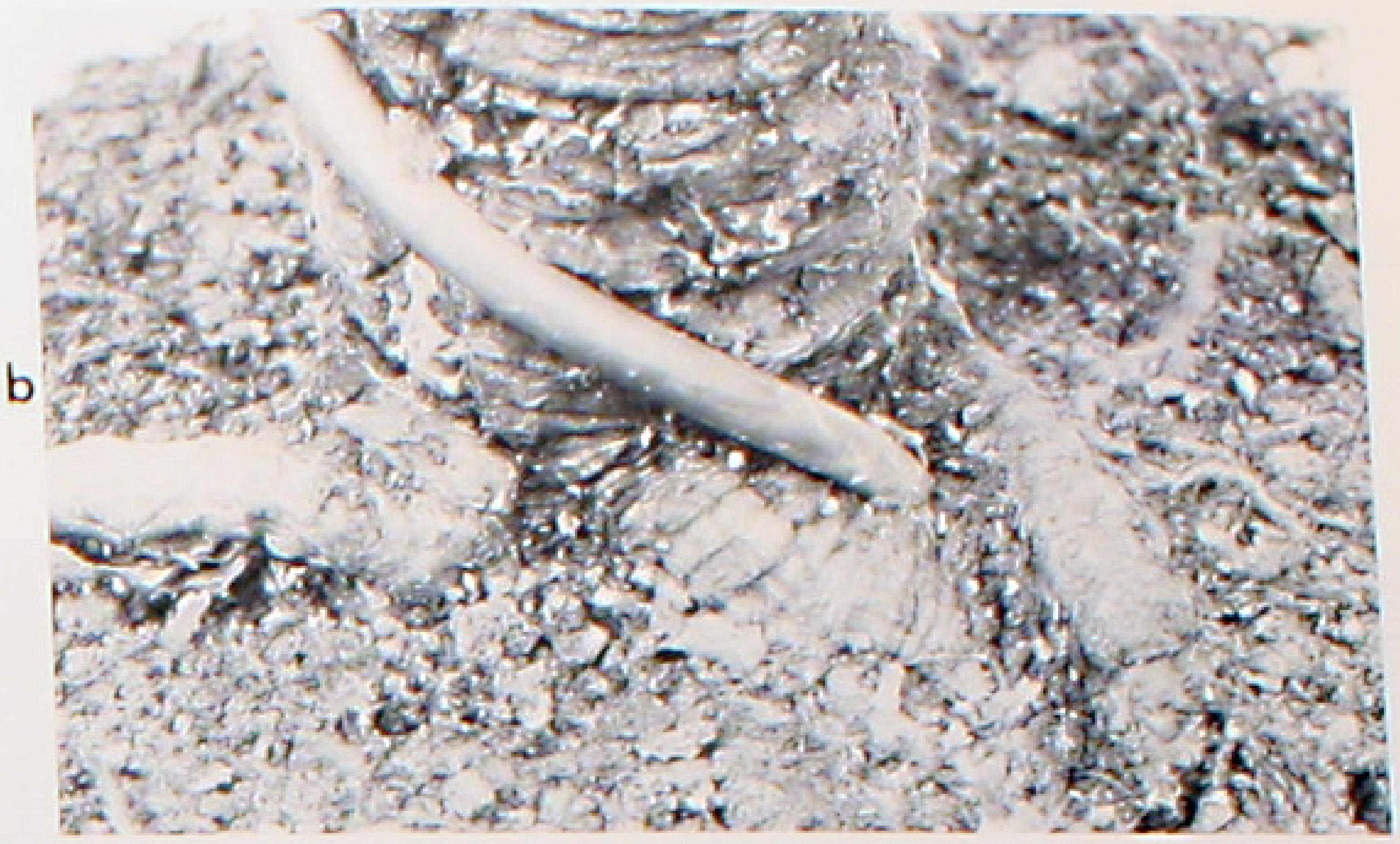


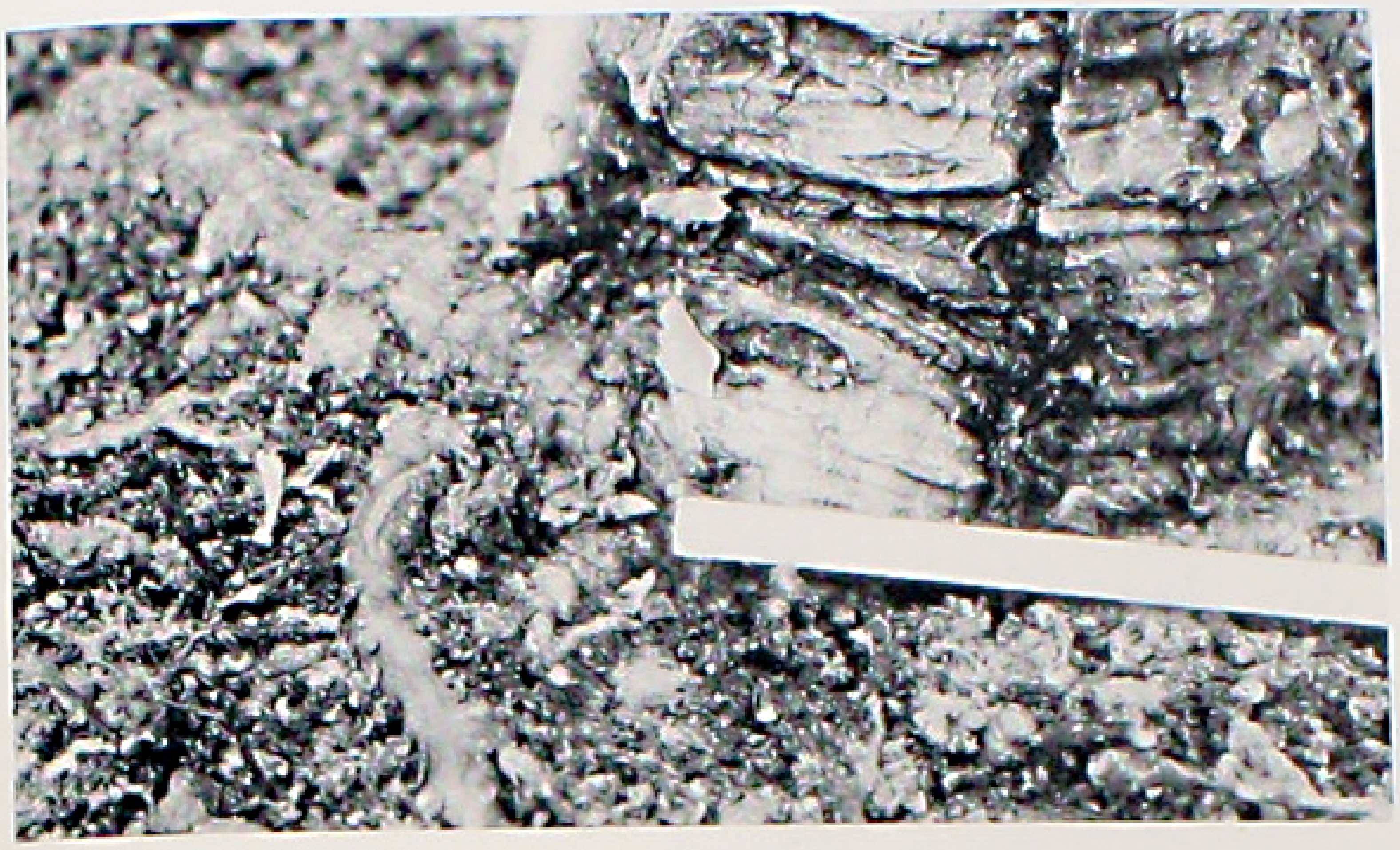
▲
Then, we wire the main branches, marked A, B, and C. Note that the rest of the branches marked with an arrow are immediately above or below the main branches. This is a security measure, in case one of the main branches dies or we wish to change the design in the near future.



◀
From left to right: the wired trunk, the wired branches, the position in which the tree will be planted.


a


b


c

Before actually transplanting, we need to correct any possible defect in the roots that will be visible above the surface of the soil. Surface roots are what will give the tree a sense of stability, and they are therefore very important.

a This section of surface roots is fine: thick roots that do not cross each other, and that spread out in all directions.

b However, in the back there are two crossed roots.

c In this photograph, the smaller root has been eliminated, as indicated by the chopstick. The tree now has good surface root structure from all views.

The beginning of the process of shaping is to define the basic style in which the tree will be designed. In this case, the tree has curves in the trunk to the right and left, to the back and front; therefore, the informal upright style will be most appropriate.

Later we will decide which will be the future primary or first branch of the tree; this should grow from the side (not from the front or back) and should be thicker than the others.

The first branch should also be the longest branch. This is just a question of time, so if there is some branch with an interesting character at the base, but uninteresting at its tip, we should not fear removing the unattractive part.

Once we have decided which the primary branch is, we clean the base of the tree of unnecessary branches. It is good practice not to prune the branches all the way back to the trunk at first. The stubs which remain after pruning may be useful as future *jin* or as places to anchor the end of some of the wires.

Since, for the informal upright style, the branches should be situated on the outside of the curves and fall into an alternating pattern, we decide which the second and third branches will be, as well as the first branch to the back, which should be situated between the first and second branches.

Once we have chosen the principal branches, according to the same formula (first branch, back branch, second branch), we eliminate all those branches that hinder our having a clear view of the design of the tree. In this operation we should, however, avoid eliminating too many branches all at once, since with conifers it is advisable to eliminate no more than a third of the unnecessary branches in each pruning operation.

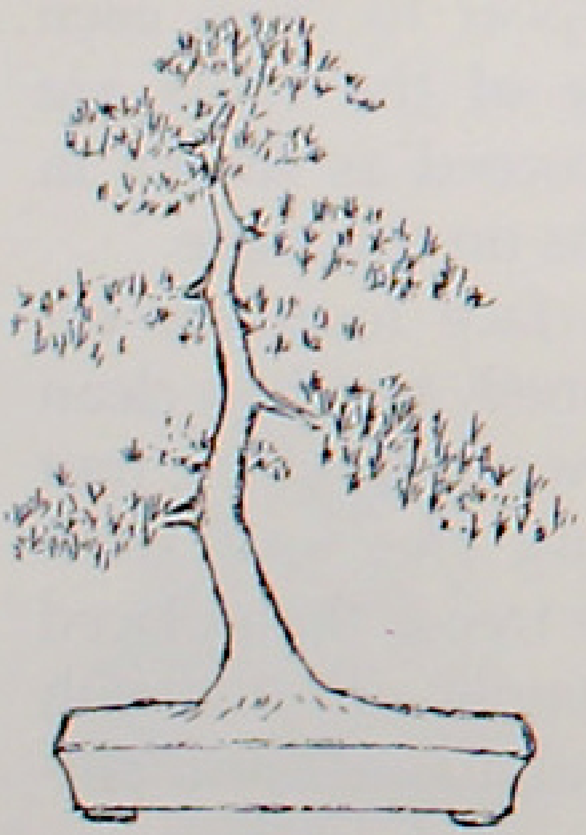
[Editor's Note: In this article, the author transplanted the tree into a bonsai pot shortly after the first major branch pruning. When repotting Japanese five-needle pine, it is general practice not to remove more than about one third of the root ball. In may not be possible or prudent to transplant a container-grown conifer immediately into a bonsai pot, depending on the mass of roots which must be removed.]

Once the shaping process is finished, we are ready to plant the newly created Bonsai in the appropriate container. Prepare everything beforehand: wire screening, potting soil, sharp scissors, chopsticks, wire to tie the tree into the container and, of course, the container itself.

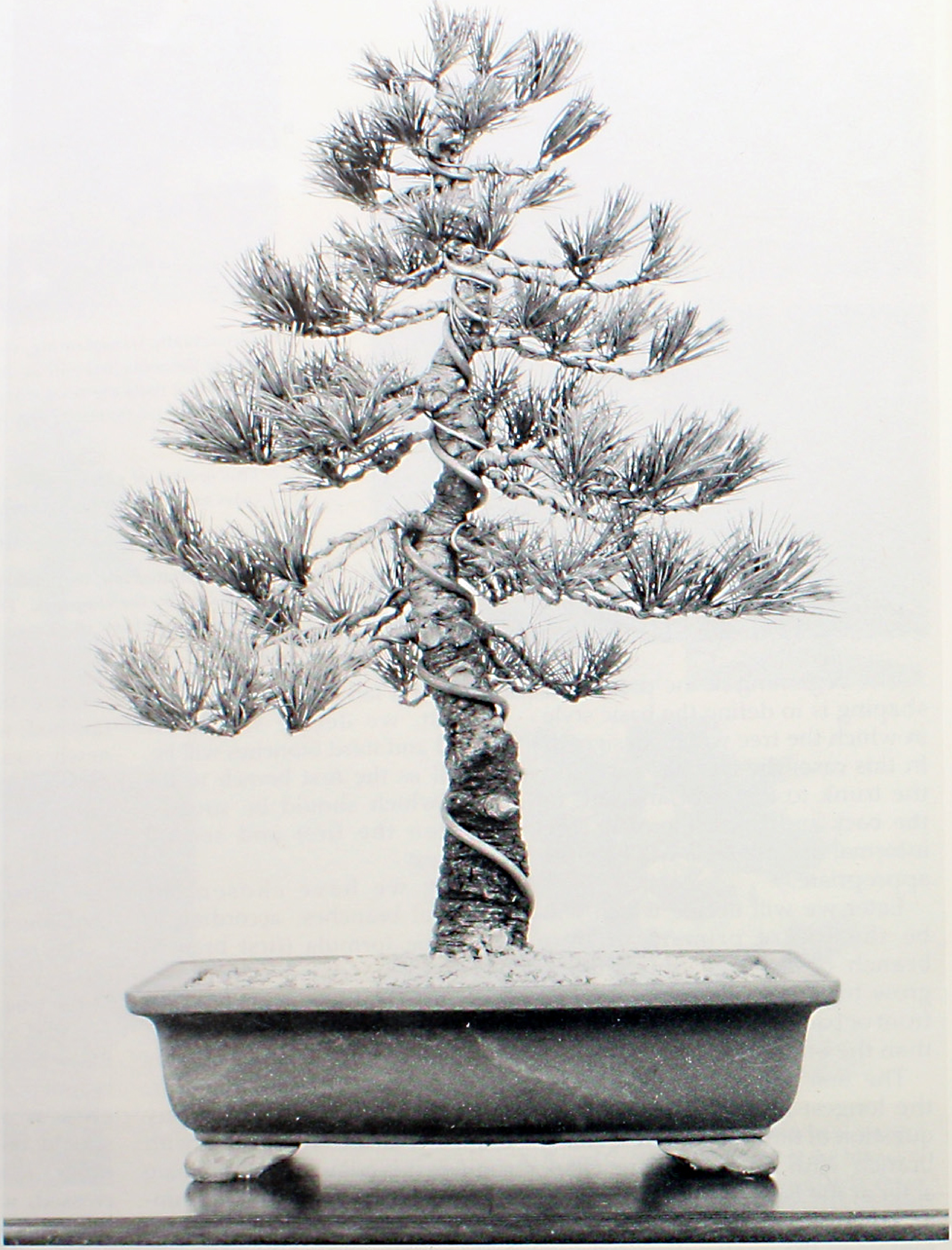
The next step is to expose and observe the *nebari* or surface roots of the tree, those roots that will be exposed to the air and remain visible when the tree is planted in the bonsai pot. Ideally, they should all grow from the same level and should not appear to cross each other. If some of the roots are crossed, we proceed as shown in the photographs on this page.

After the surface roots are exposed and defined, we then clean the side and lower part of the root ball, removing the soil with chopsticks. The tree is then placed in a bonsai container, secured with wire in the usual manner and potting mix added.

In just a few years, we will have completed the major branch pruning and will be able to display our new Japanese five-needle pine bonsai in a suitable more definitive container.



The small photographs show various profiles of the tree. The sketch shows how the tree will look within ten years.



Editor's Notes on 5 needle pine

Major branch pruning of Japanese five-needle pine is usually done in the winter while the tree is dormant or very early spring prior to bud growth. No more than one third of the unnecessary branches should be removed.

Wiring can be done anytime, but is more usually done when the tree is dormant. If wiring pines in the early spring, be careful not to damage the bark and buds.

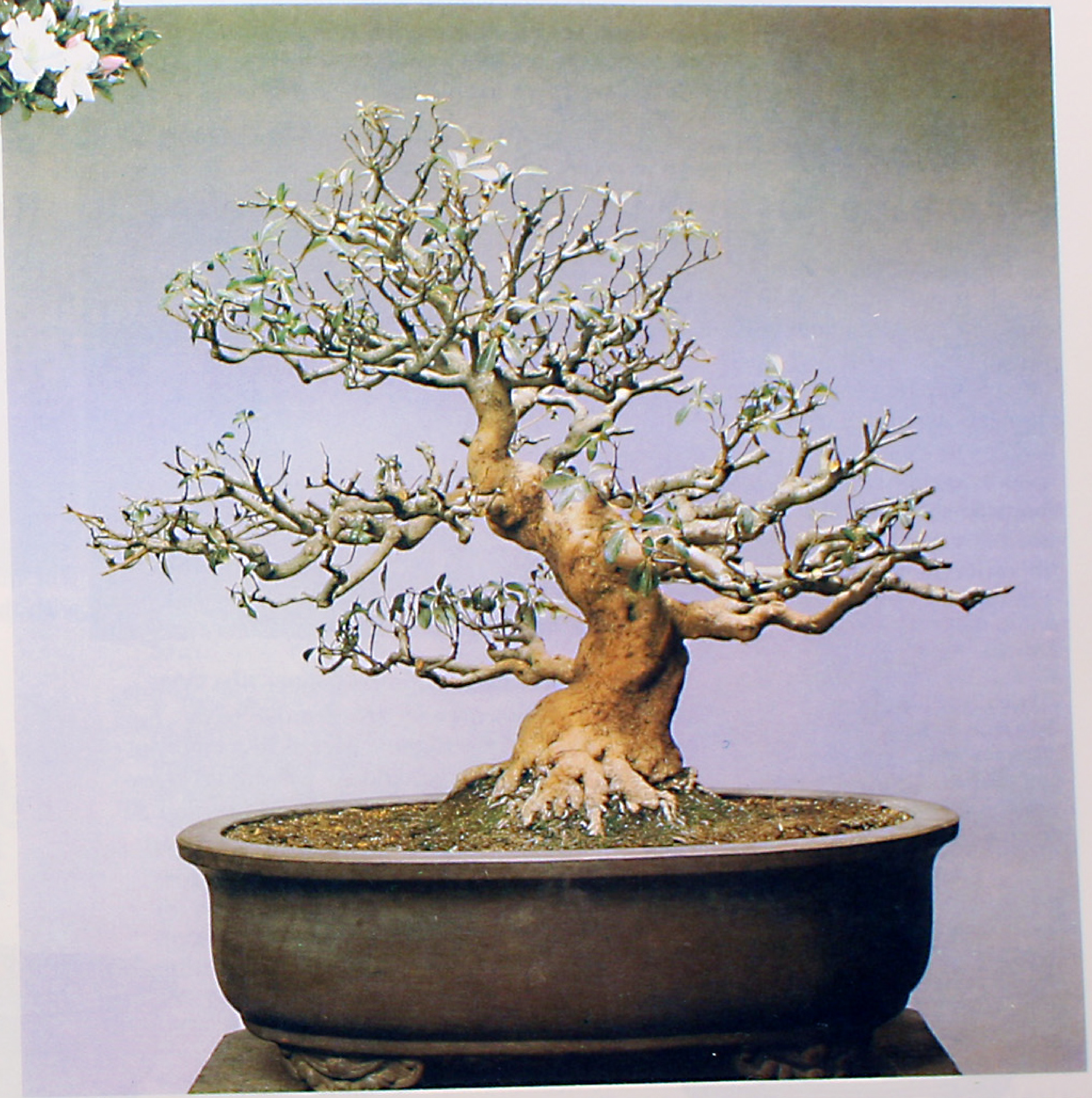
Repotting is also an early spring activity, done before the buds swell. Remove dead roots and heavy roots as needed, but no more than one third of the fibrous roots. Some recent experiences suggest that another effective time to repot is mid to late summer after growth has stopped.

Potting soil should drain very quickly, with very little organic material.

Location: Full sun. The needles appreciate misting during hot, dry spells.

Water thoroughly, but do not water too frequently; five needle pines **do not like overwatering.**

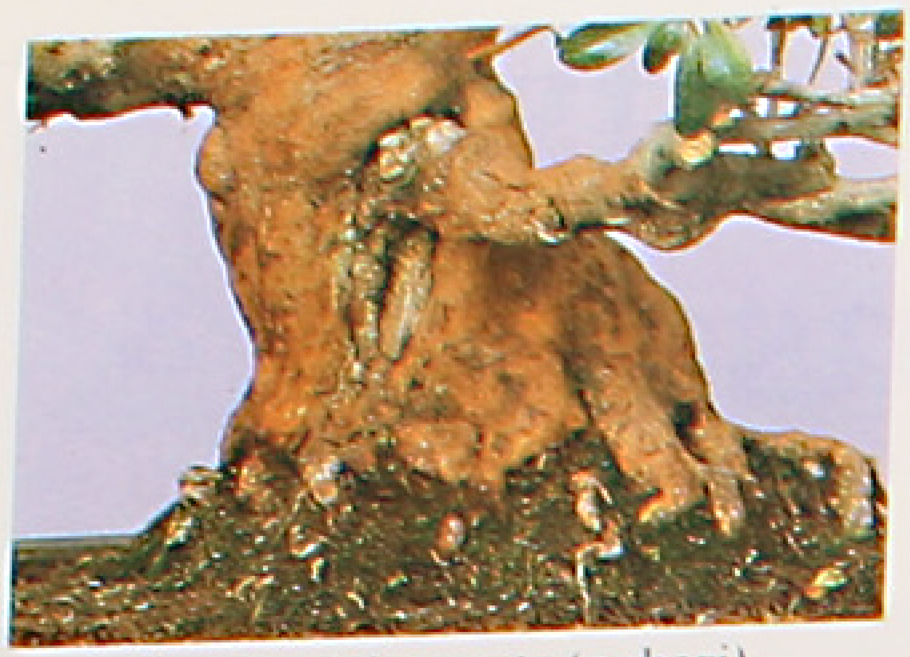
Refinement of Satsuki Azalea Bonsai



Photograph ▶ taken March 25, 1985. Height: 54.5 cm. Width: 74 cm. Rhododendron indicum 'Kaho'.

The azalea I am concerned with in these pages came into my care two years ago. My reasons for acquiring it were its splendid rootage and the beautiful line and taper of the trunk. However, the tree had not been well cared for. It had always been maintained with a silhouette that was much too dense so that nature itself had pruned and eliminated the interior branches. Even so, the character of the trunk, twisted at the base and with gentle curves, made the effort that would be needed to restyle the tree worthwhile.

[Editor's Note:] This article describes techniques for caring for, restyling and refining Satsuki azalea Bonsai. Satsuki means "Fifth Month" of the Oriental lunar calendar, June in the West, and includes the evergreen azaleas which flower in the late May through June period. Satsuki includes any cultivar derived primarily from Rhododendron indicum and/or R. tamurae (R. eriocarpum) with occasional other species contributing. For further information, refer to Azaleas by Fred C. Galle.



▲ Detail of the roots (nebari).

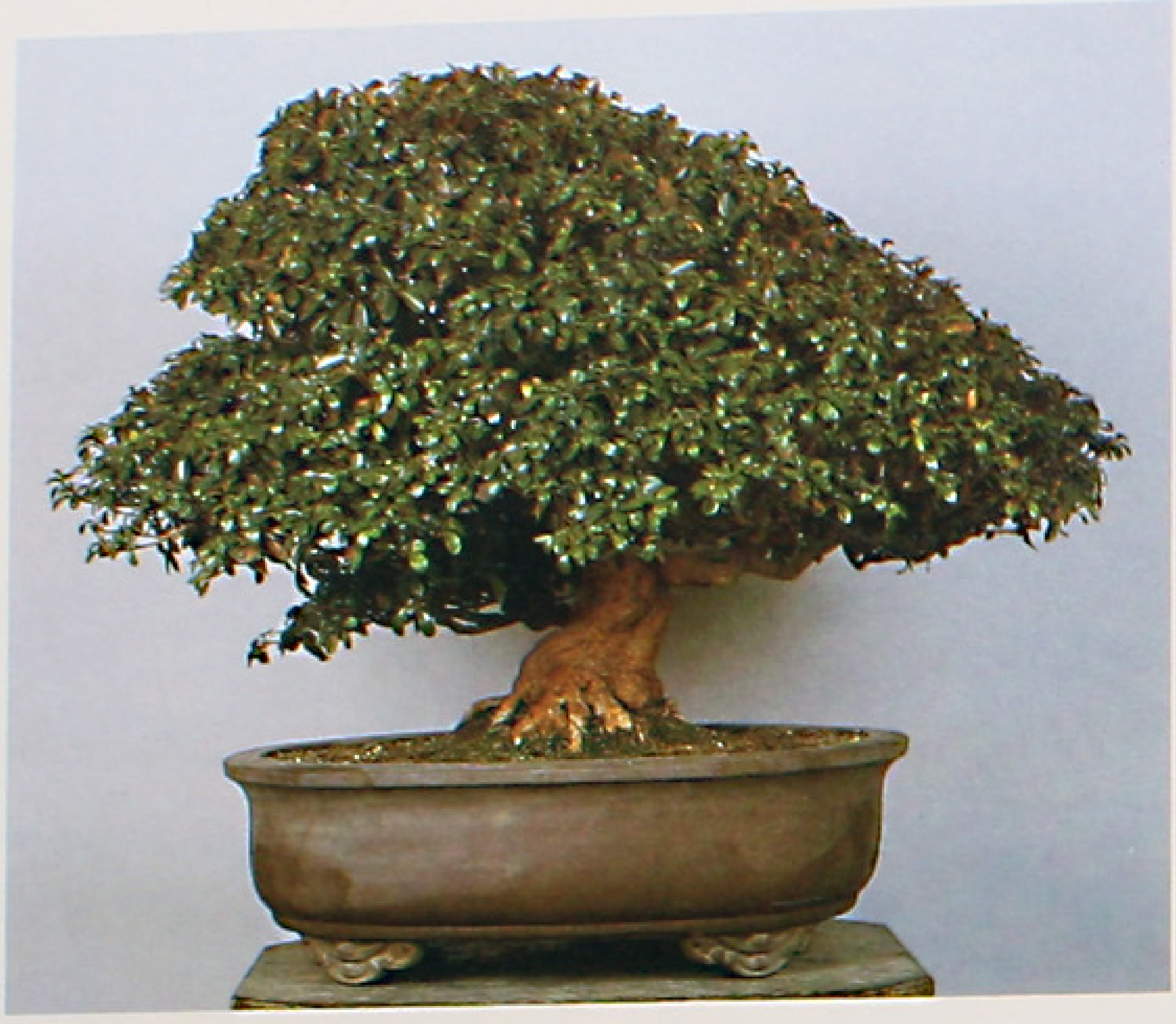
Early Spring, 1985

In the early spring of 1985, I began to work on this tree. Its appearance at that time was just as shown by the photographs on this page.

Azaleas are strong, vigorous plants, and respond well to drastic pruning. It is sometimes even advisable to eliminate the branches entirely, when they have grown too old and the silhouette of the tree is excessively large. This treatment may seem a bit extreme, but azaleas characteristically have a strong will to survive. Since we are dealing with a shrub that is long-lived, it is prepared to withstand very adverse conditions. Throughout their whole lives, azaleas produce adventitious buds readily from trunk and branches.

If removing all the branches entirely seems desirable, this can be done in two different ways.

Taken at the time of purchase. Height: 60 cm. Width: 100cm. ▼



Pruning to Reshape (1)

The first way is to cut all of the branches off the tree. In this case, we must then select those buds that spring forth in appropriate places to later form the main branches.

Whenever pruning an azalea, except for very small branches, we **always** apply sealing paste on the wounds in order to promote tissue growth.

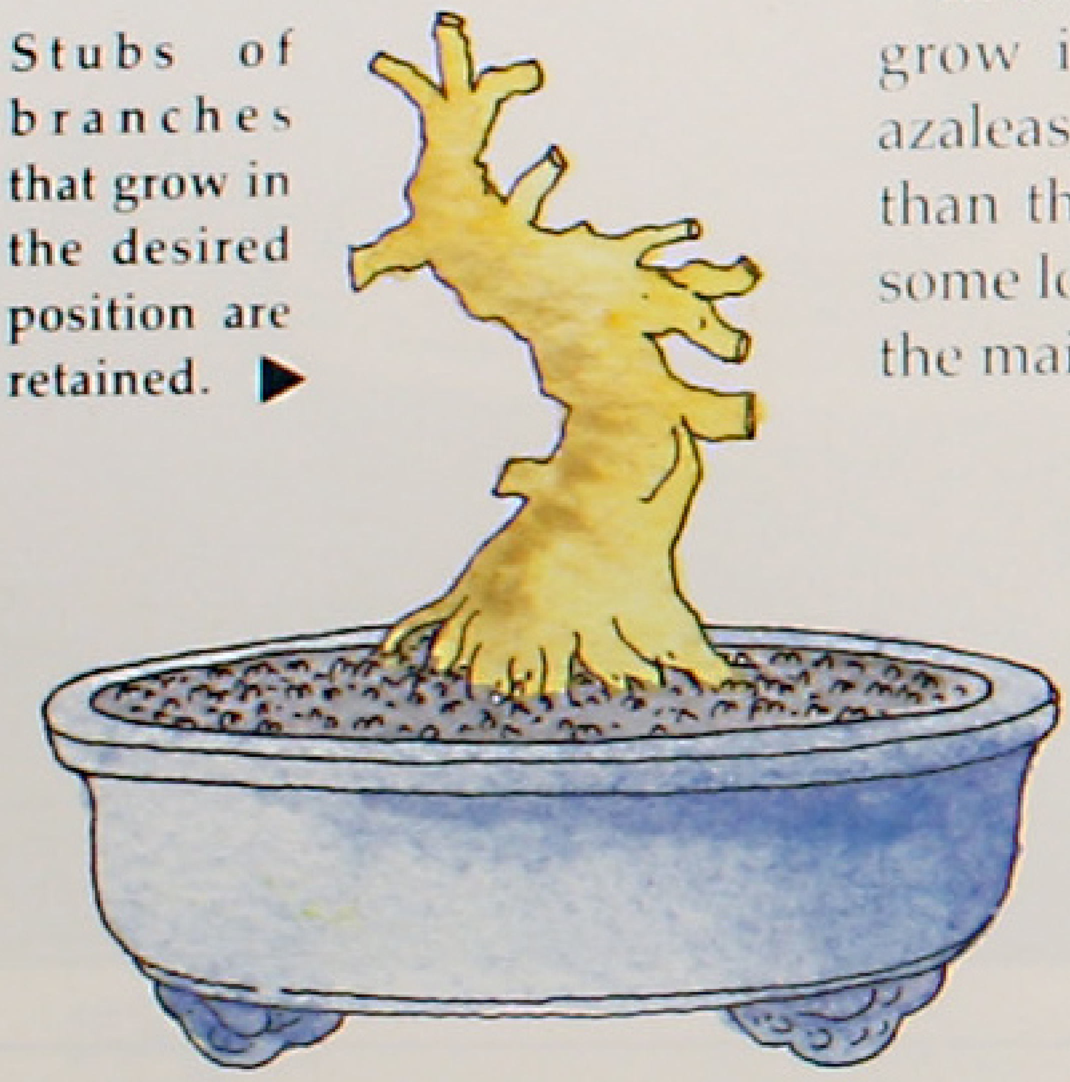
Pruning to Reshape (2)

The second technique consists of totally pruning unwanted branches and, for those branches that are correctly placed, leaving a little stub. This defines the basic structure of the tree. By notching the stub, applying wire and bending it, we can ensure that the future branch will make the correct angle with the trunk.

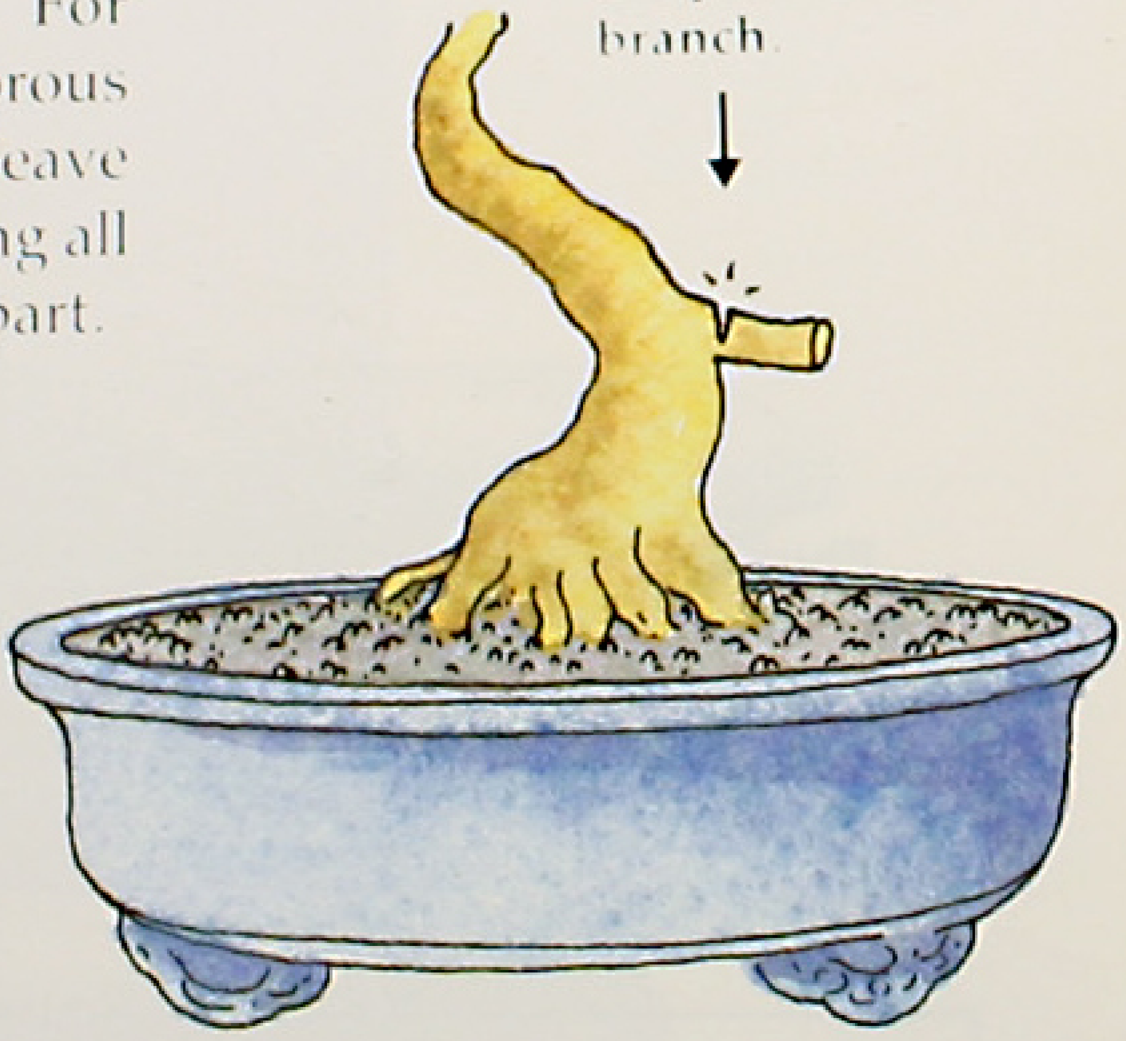
In both cases, we need to remember that azaleas grow in a different way from most trees. For azaleas, the apex, the highest part, is less vigorous than the rest of the tree, and so we should leave some longer branches; or, in the case of pruning all the main branches, leave stubs on the higher part.

If we are working with an azalea cultivated in the field, there is less risk, but in the case of an azalea cultivated in a container, we can even lose the entire apex of our Bonsai if we prune the high branches excessively.

Stubs of branches that grow in the desired position are retained. ▶



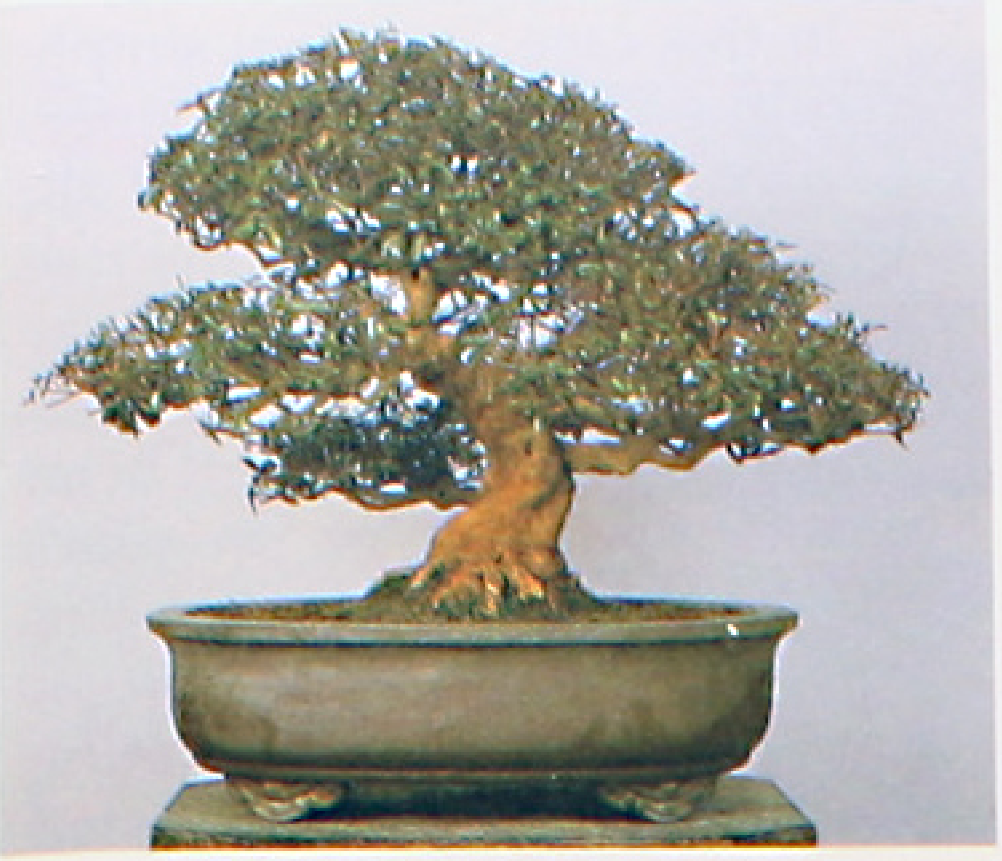
Notch in the stub permits lowering the position of the branch.



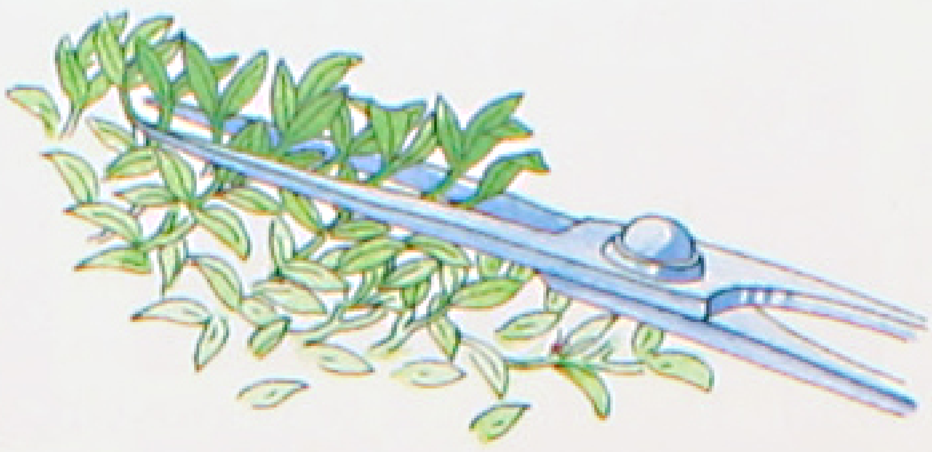
Left side.

Back view.

Right side.



The tree's appearance after its first trim.

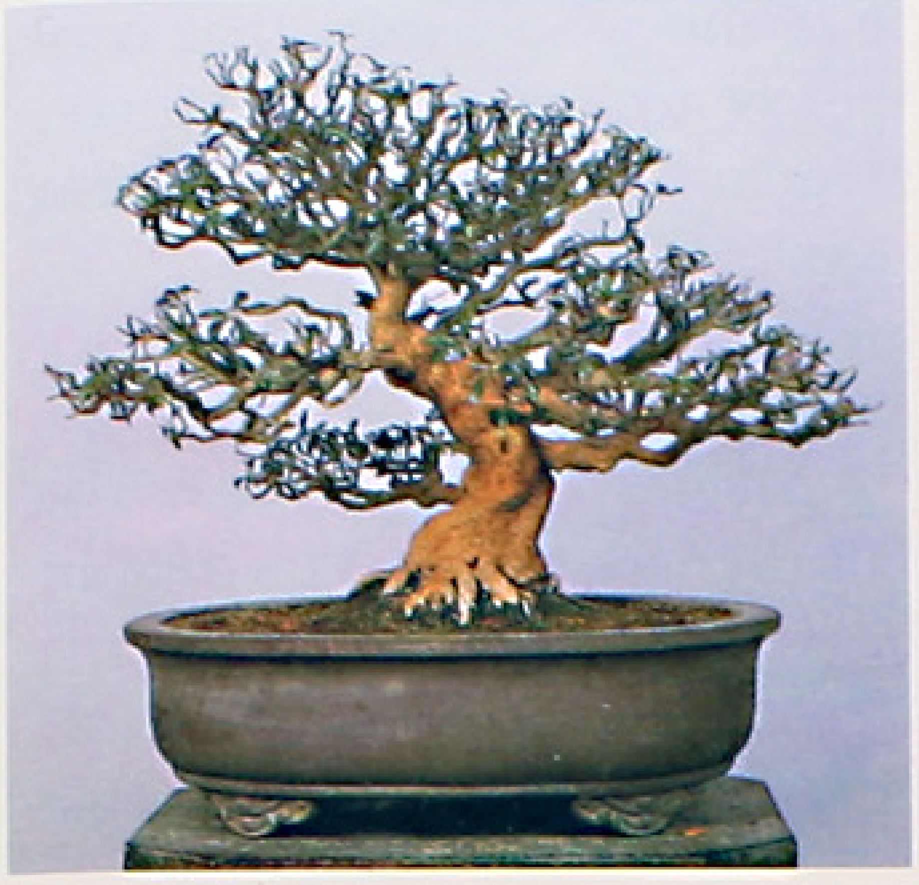


With fine scissors, the excess foliage of the tree was removed.

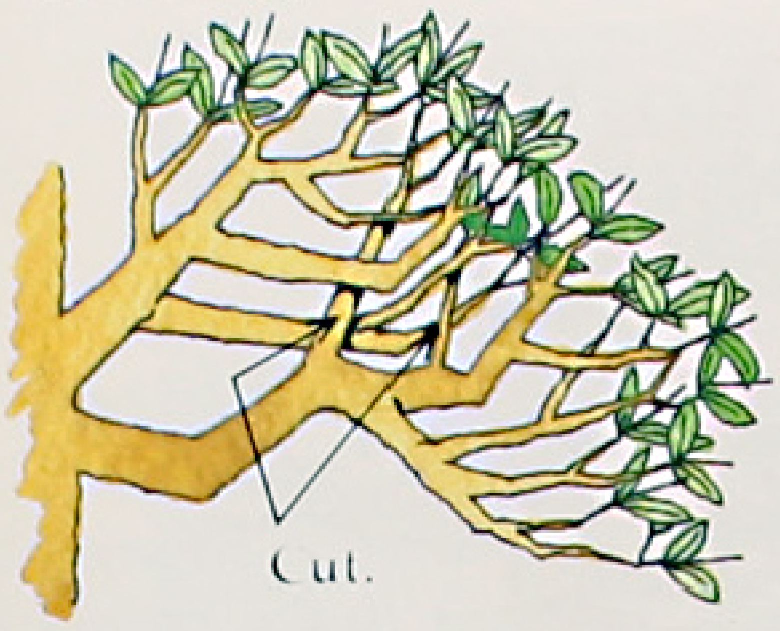
Shaping the Tree

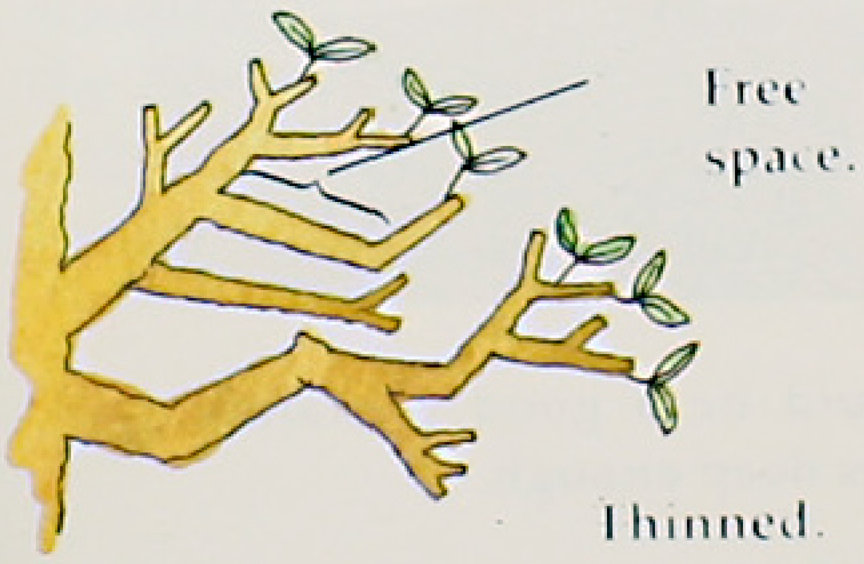
The first step in the shaping process is **to see the tree.** It was impossible to appreciate the structure of the branches through the very dense silhouette it initially possessed. So, with some sharp scissors, we began to cut the cloak of foliage, as if we were dealing with a hedge, until it was possible to see the ramification.

I did not worry about cutting leaves in half, flower buds, etc. The most important thing in this step was to achieve an adequate design, so the scissors were used as if we were using them to cut hair.



The ramification is still much too confusing.

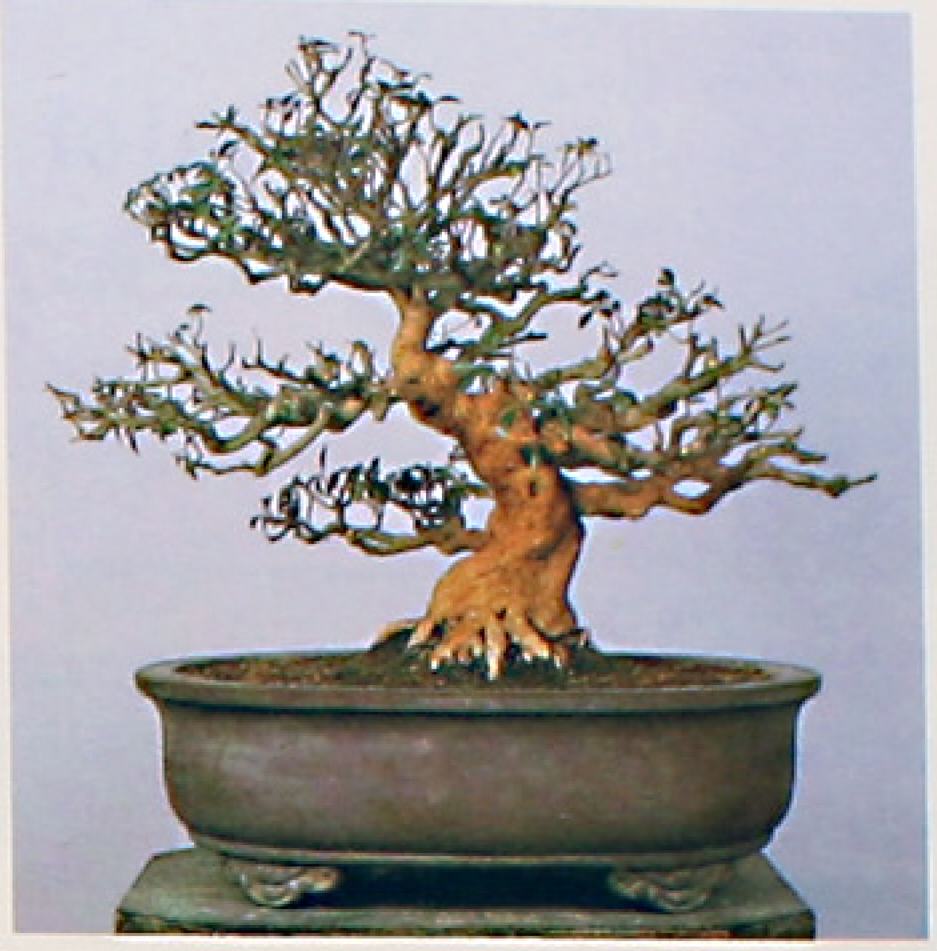




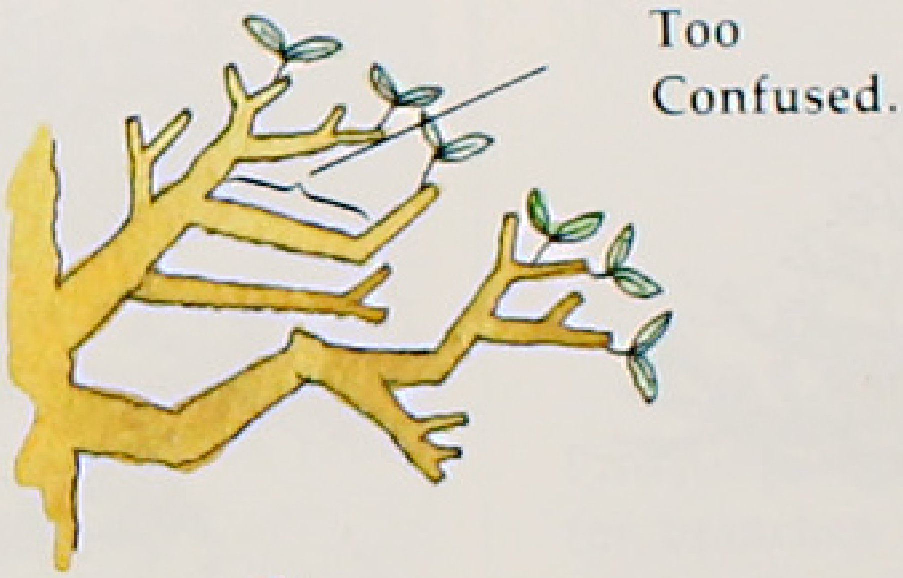
Shaping

The second step consists of thinning the masses of secondary and tertiary branches. Therefore, I cut the branches that crossed each other, those that grew directly up or down, etc. In this case sealing paste was not used, since the branches removed were relatively fine.

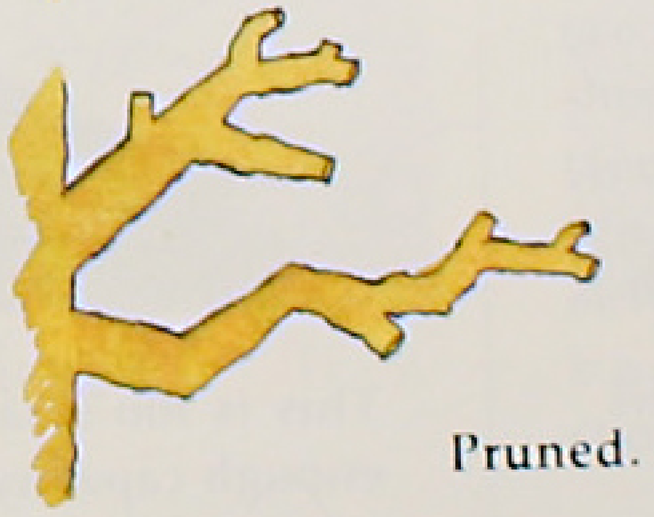
The objective is to obtain enough free space between the branches to allow them to grow, in the future, without crossing each other. It is not absolutely necessary for all the little branches to have leaves, but if they do, they should point to a free zone, preferably horizontally and outwards.



Here tertiary branches have been thinned out.



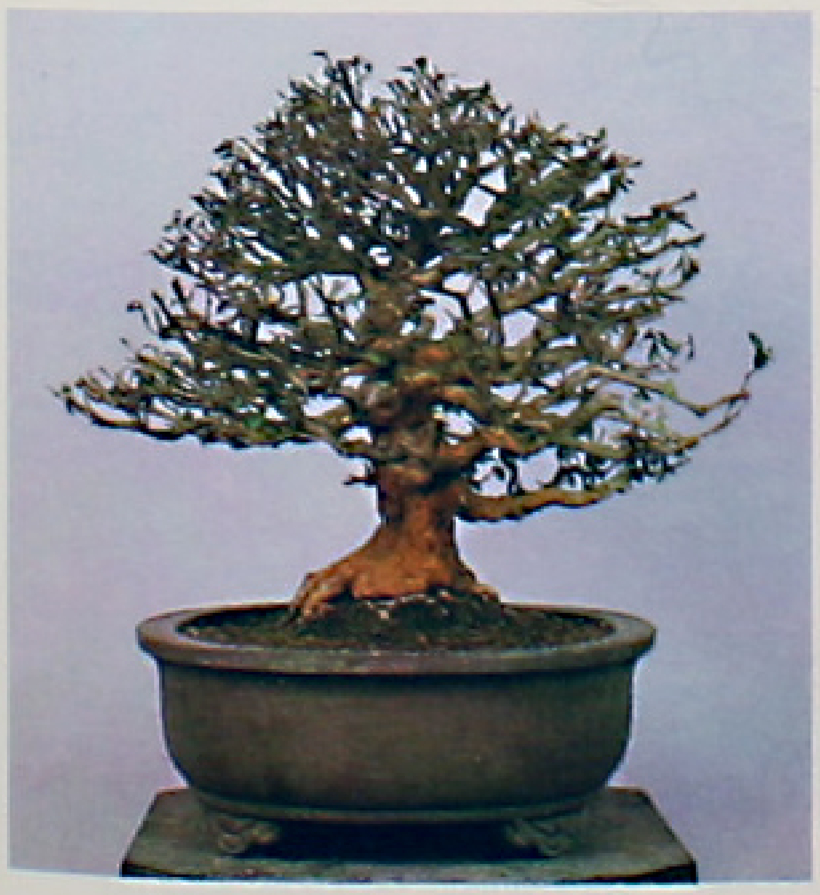
Too Confused.



Shaping

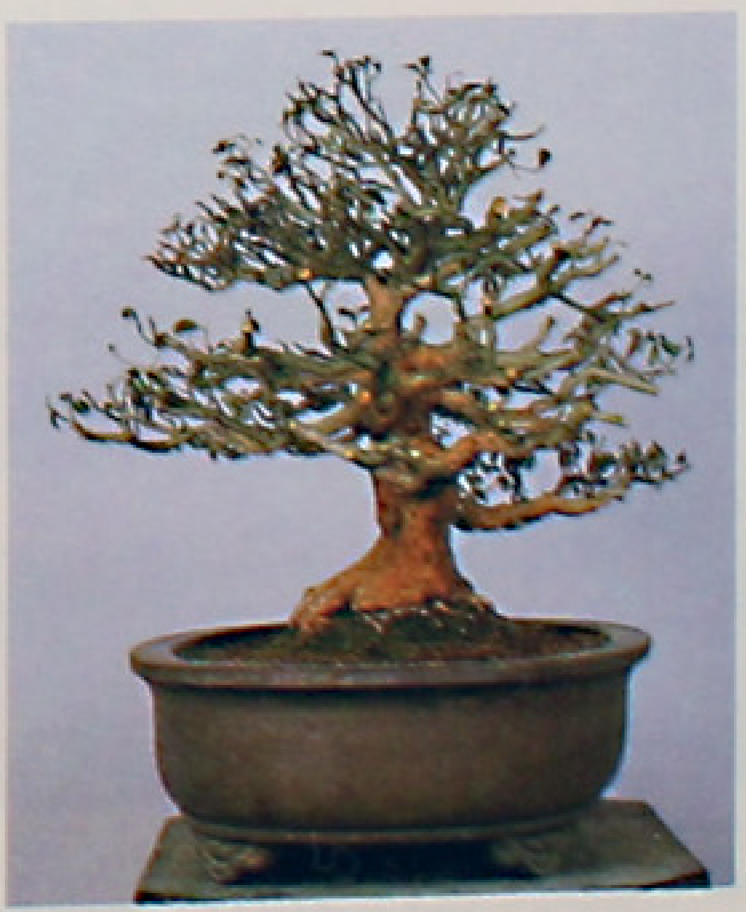
The third step could be called balancing. Here I attempted to balance the vigor of the various parts of the tree and at the same time enhance the design. I cut the branches on the right part of the tree more since, due to the direction of the trunk, there needed to be an important mass of greenery on the left. For the same reason, I was able to form a mass of greenery where there was an outside curve in the trunk.

If you look at the lower right hand illustration, you will see how the pruning has ensured that, in the future, the branches will form a clean, orderly structure.

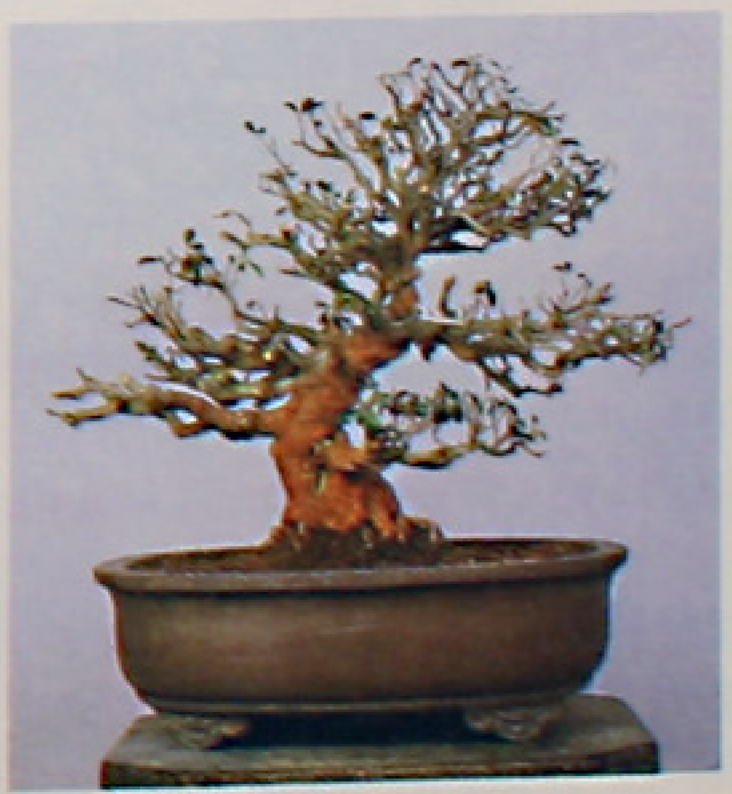


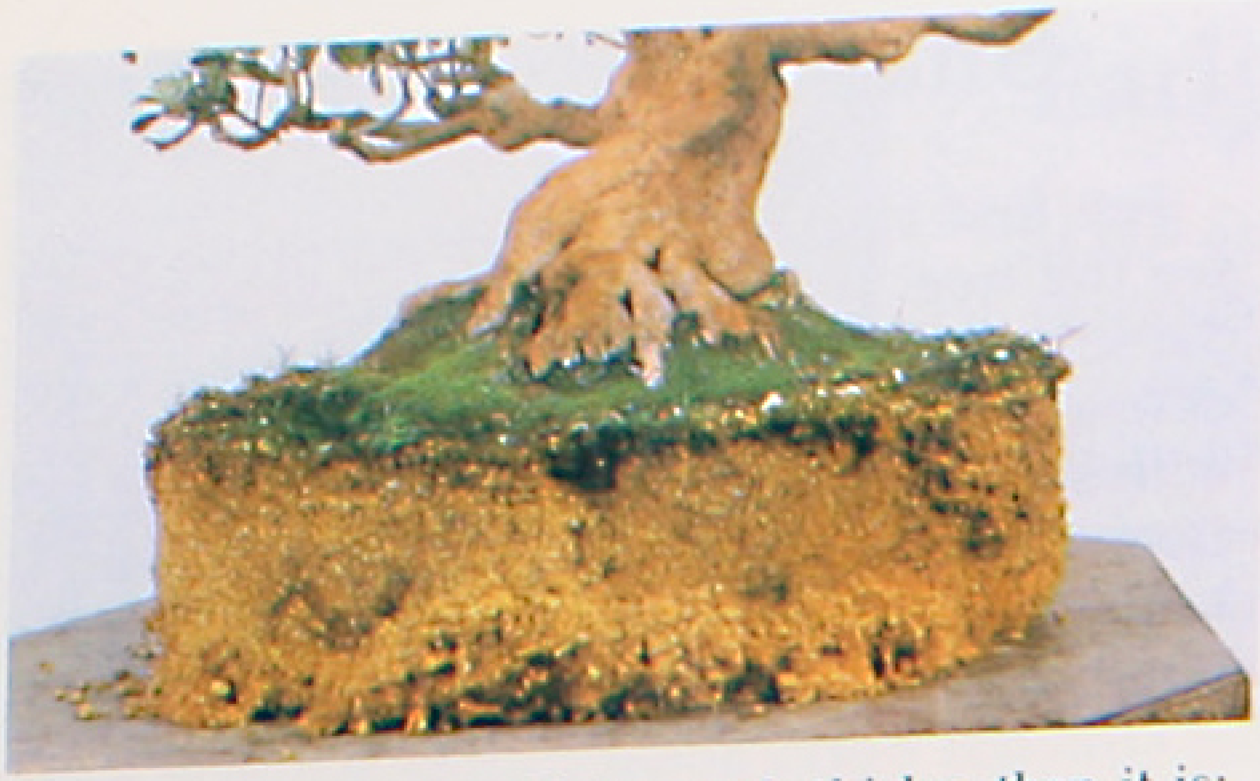
Here the trimming is finished.

The ramification is still too confused.



The pruning is finished.





The root system should be much thicker than it is; this means that the soil mix was too fine or drainage was obstructed.

3 Weeks later

Three weeks later, the tree had begun to recuperate from pruning and had even begun to bud. Therefore, it was possible to repot it; in fact, it was prudent to do so, because I had noticed when watering it that the soil was slow in absorbing water, which is a sign that drainage is obstructed or that the soil has become too old.

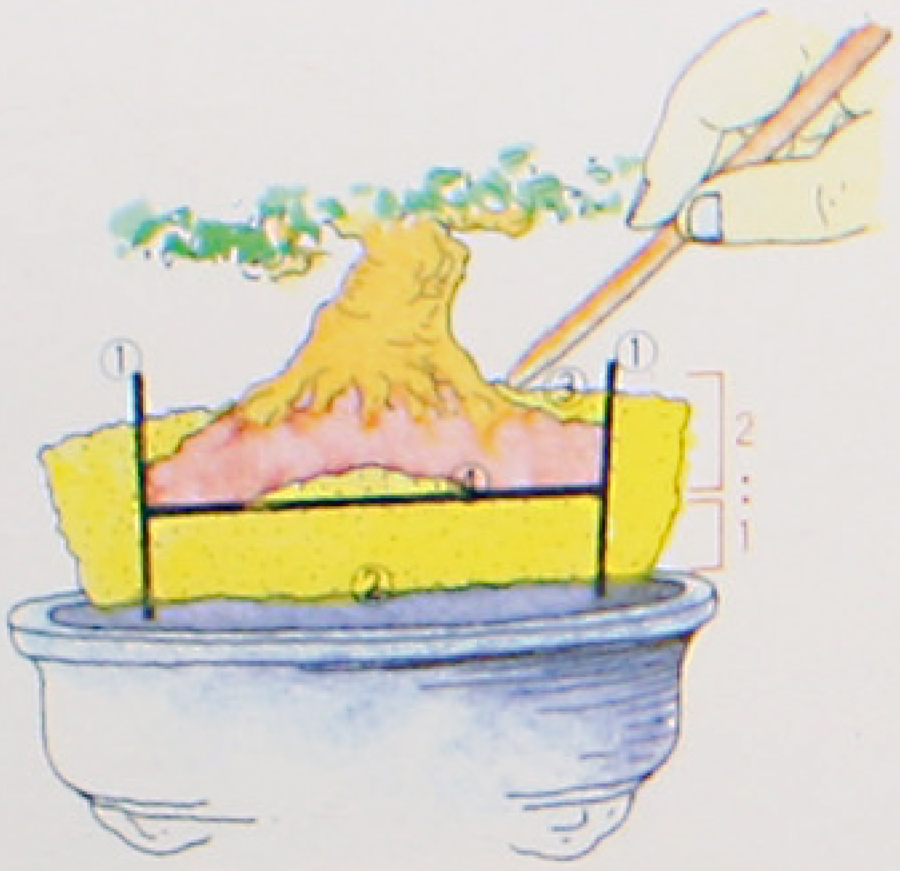
In this case, we were simply going to change the container, hardly pruning the roots at all. However, when I took the tree out of the pot, I could see, as the photograph shows, that although the tree had not been repotted for five or six years that many of the roots were weak and some were rotten. The reason could have been the soil mix, for the soil consisted almost entirely of fine-grained clay.

Repotting

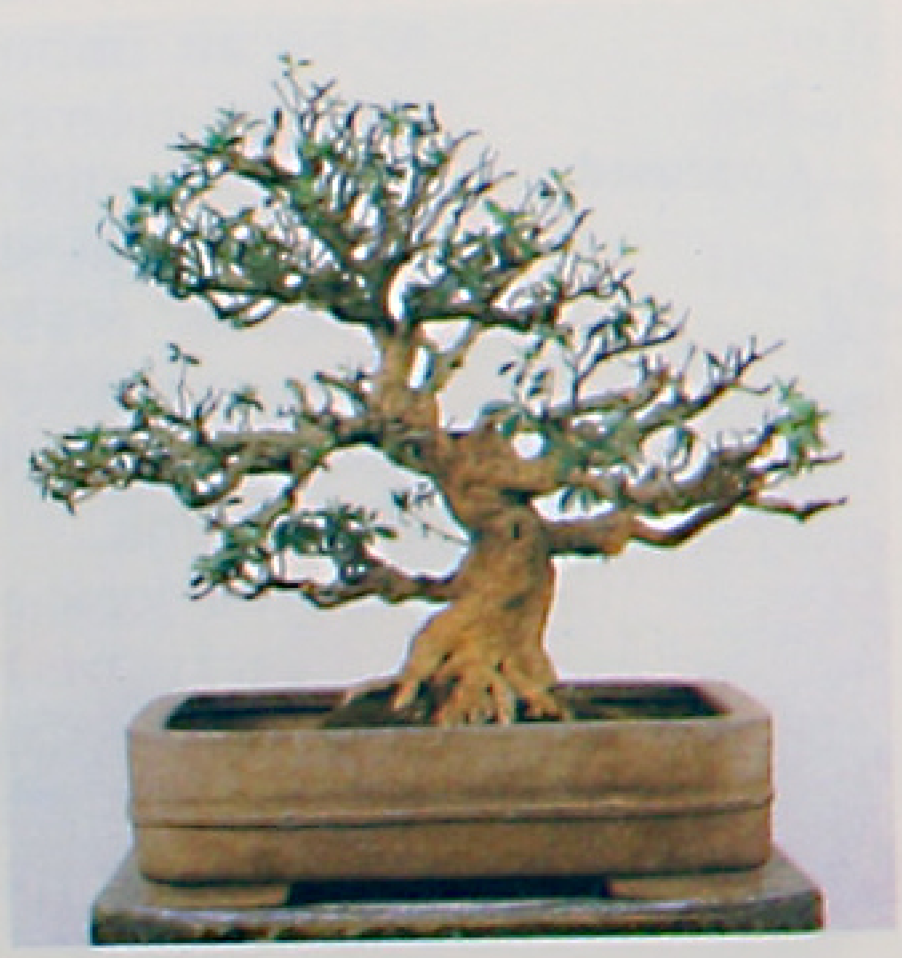
Therefore, although this had not been my intention, I had to clean the whole area that contained a large number of rotten roots, the lower third of the root system and, in addition, the area immediately below the trunk.

Once the root mass of the Bonsai was free of dead roots, we proceeded to select the appropriate container, taking into account not only the style and the shape of the tree but also its health. Considering, too, that we were dealing with a tree that would need to create a new mass of leaves, we chose a deep pot, which would allow the tree to grow rapidly.

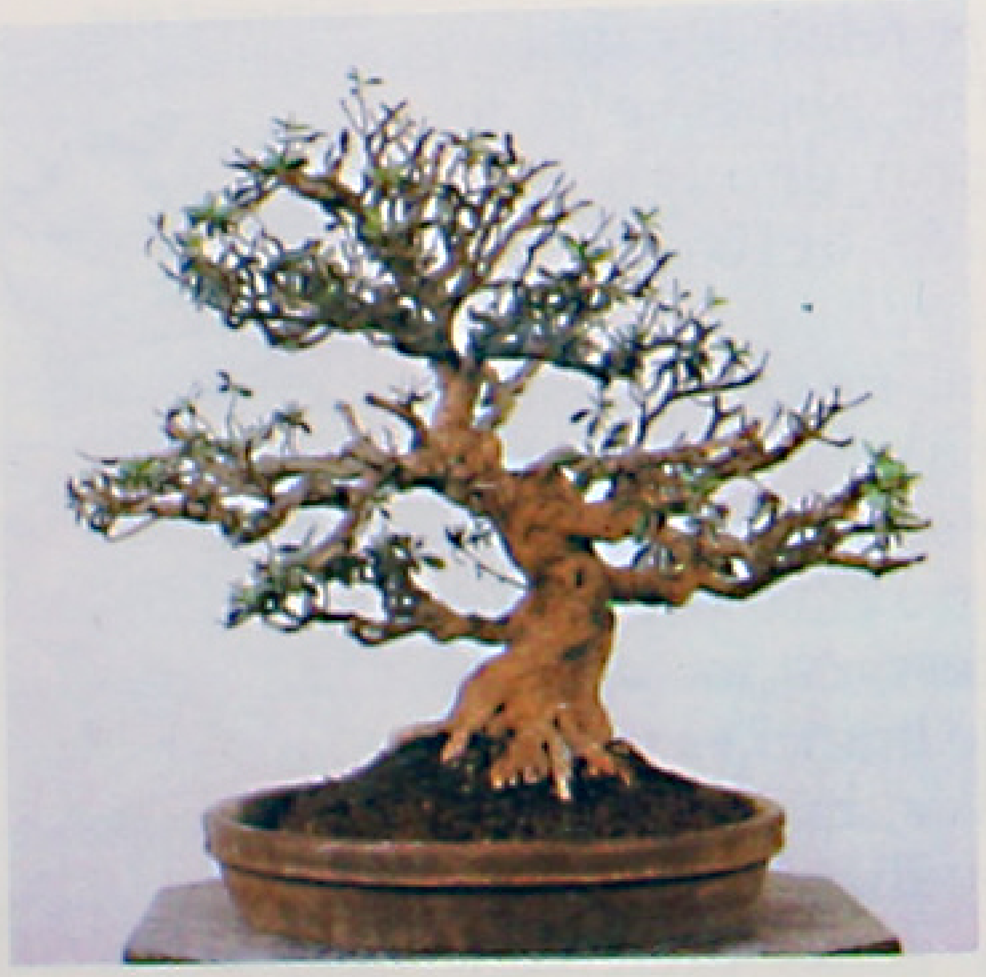
▲ Detail of the fine roots.



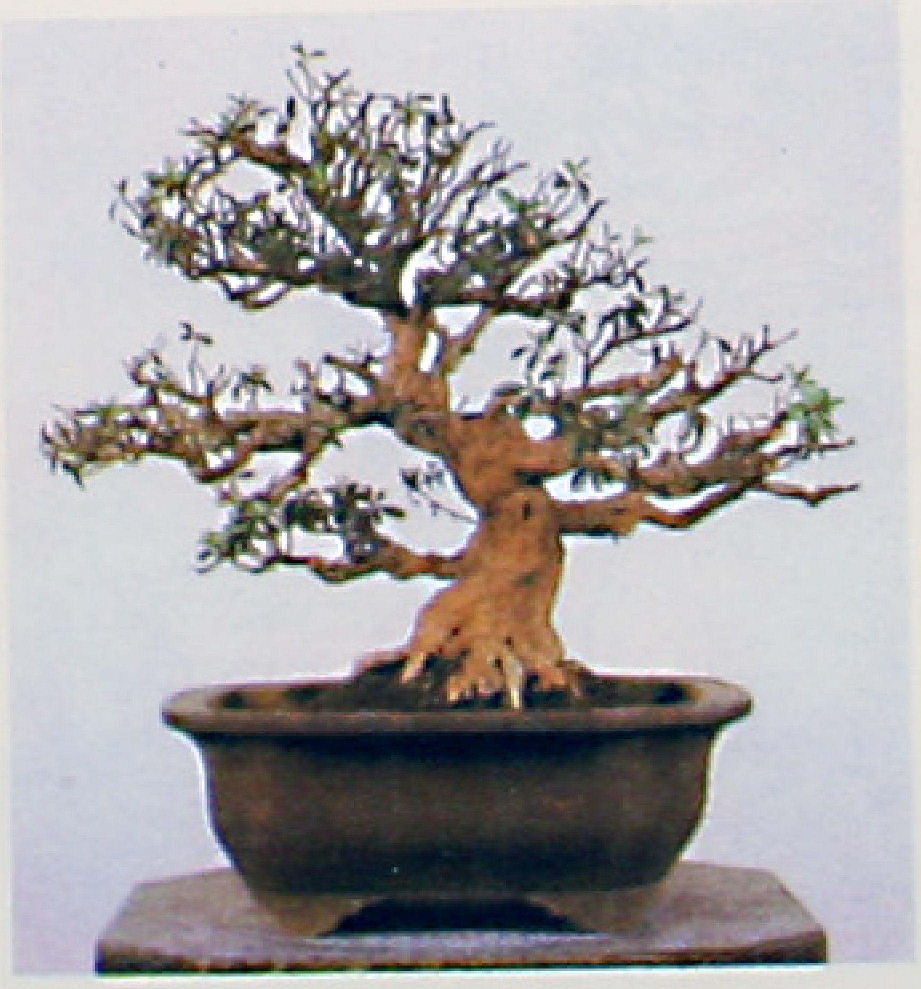
▶ When transplanting, we need to remove soil from 1/3 of the original root system. Also remove soil from Zones 3 and 4. The drainage in Zone 2 should be replaced.



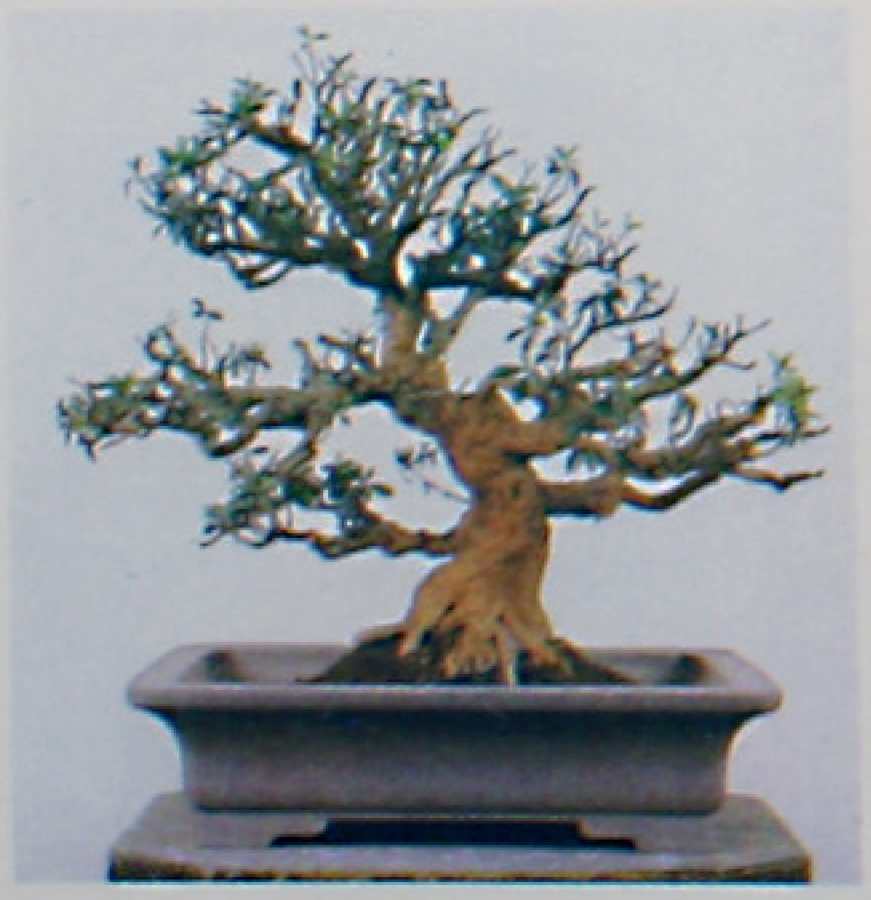
This pot is too large. It overwhelms the tree.



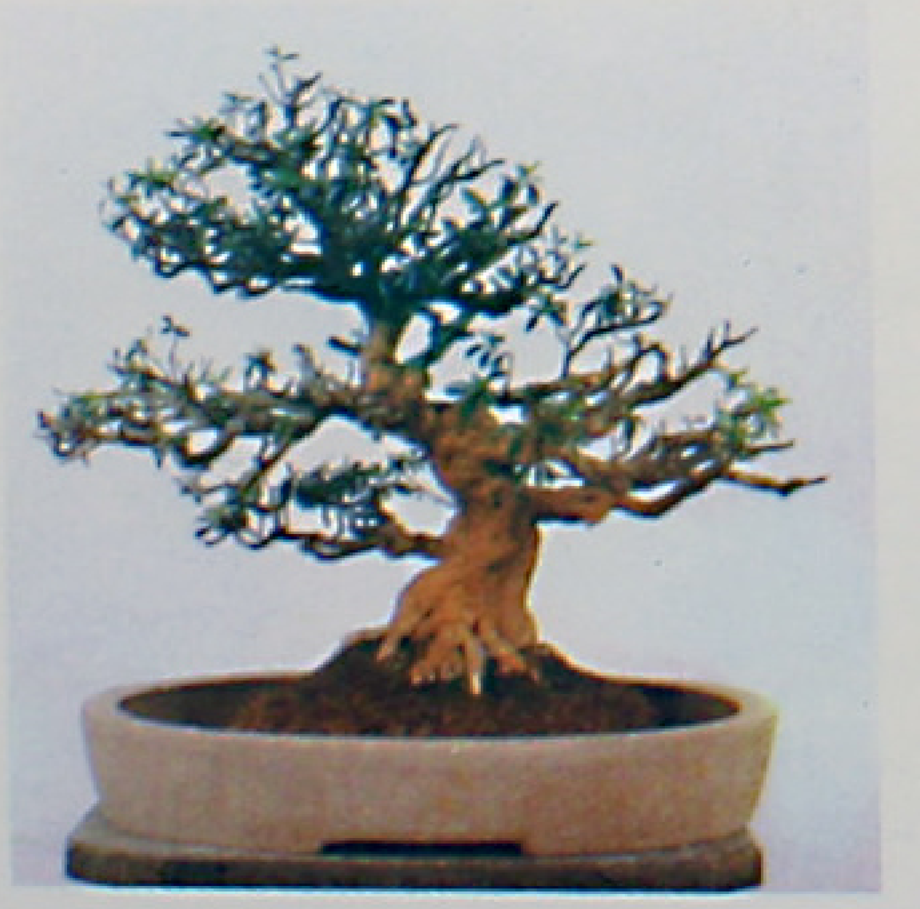
This is too small. It does not have enough capacity.



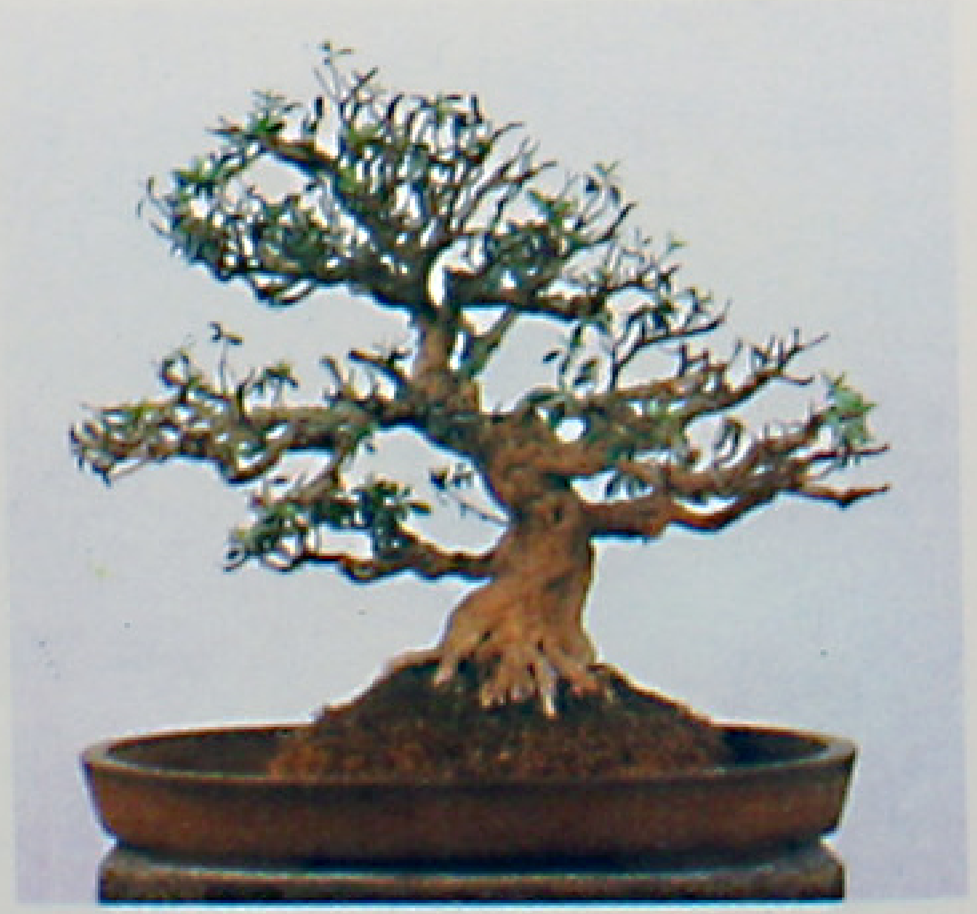
This could be a good container, since it is deep enough.



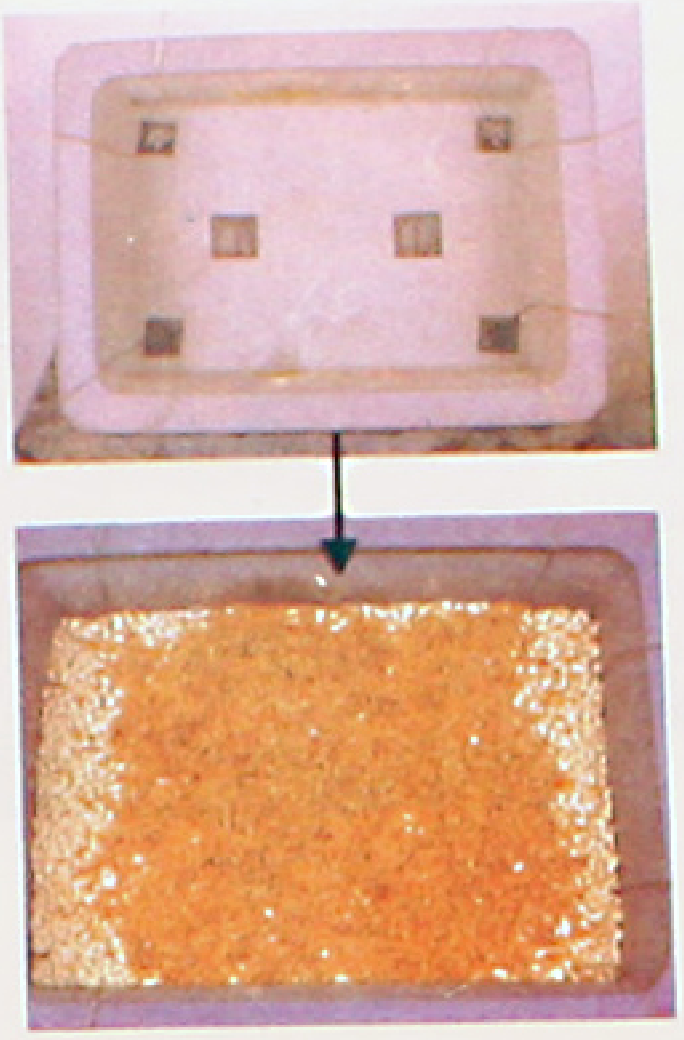
The ideal pot: it is deep and complements the curves of the trunk.

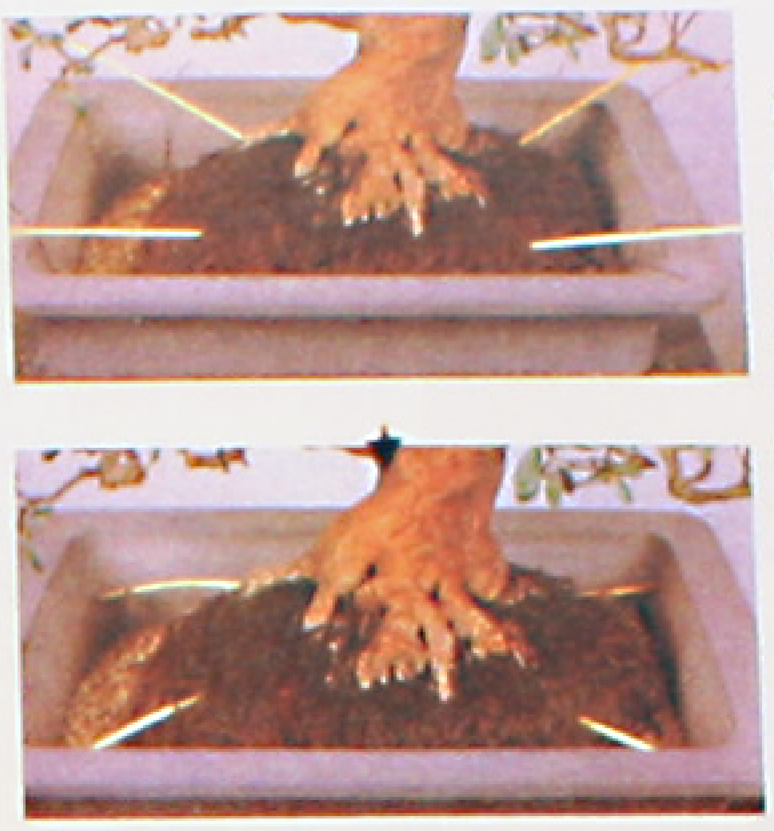


This is perhaps too large.



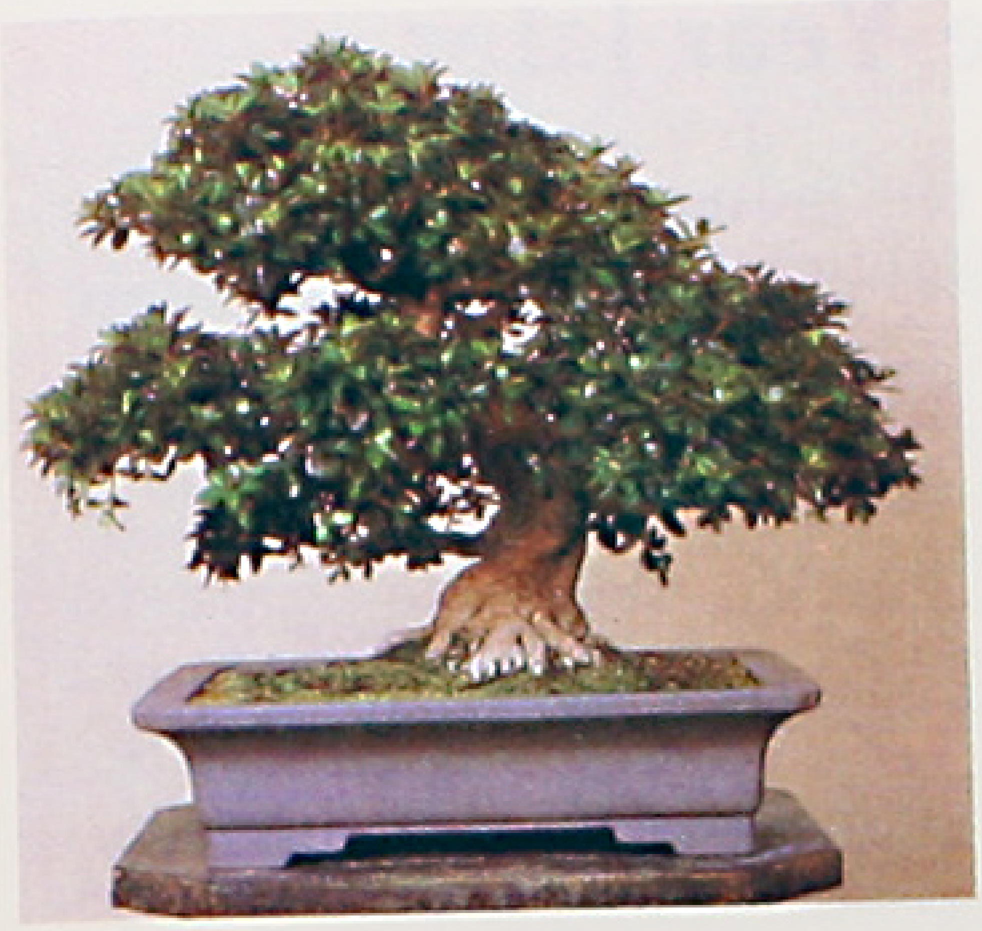
And here, it is not deep enough to contain the root mass.





Process of repotting, step by step.

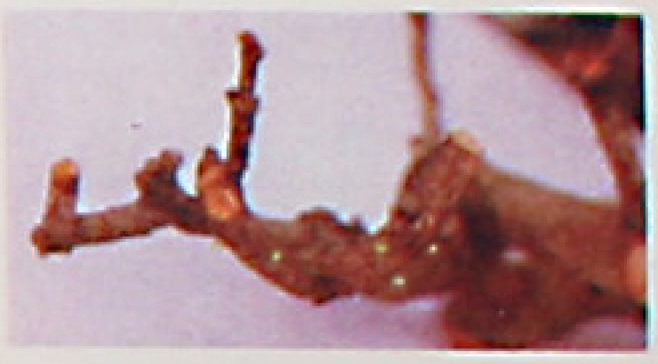
The Bonsai was now repotted in the usual manner. First, we placed wire screen over the drainage holes to retain the soil. Secondly, wire ties, as shown at the far left, for securing the tree in the container were put in place. The next step was putting down the drainage layer, composed of coarse gravel or river sand (3 to 5 mm.). Next we added a layer of soil mix sufficiently thick to permit the thicker surface roots to be visible above the level of the rim of the pot. The bonsai was then positioned and soil introduced between the roots with bamboo or wooden chopsticks. The final step was to secure the Bonsai in its container using the wire ties to avoid any possible movement.



3 Months later

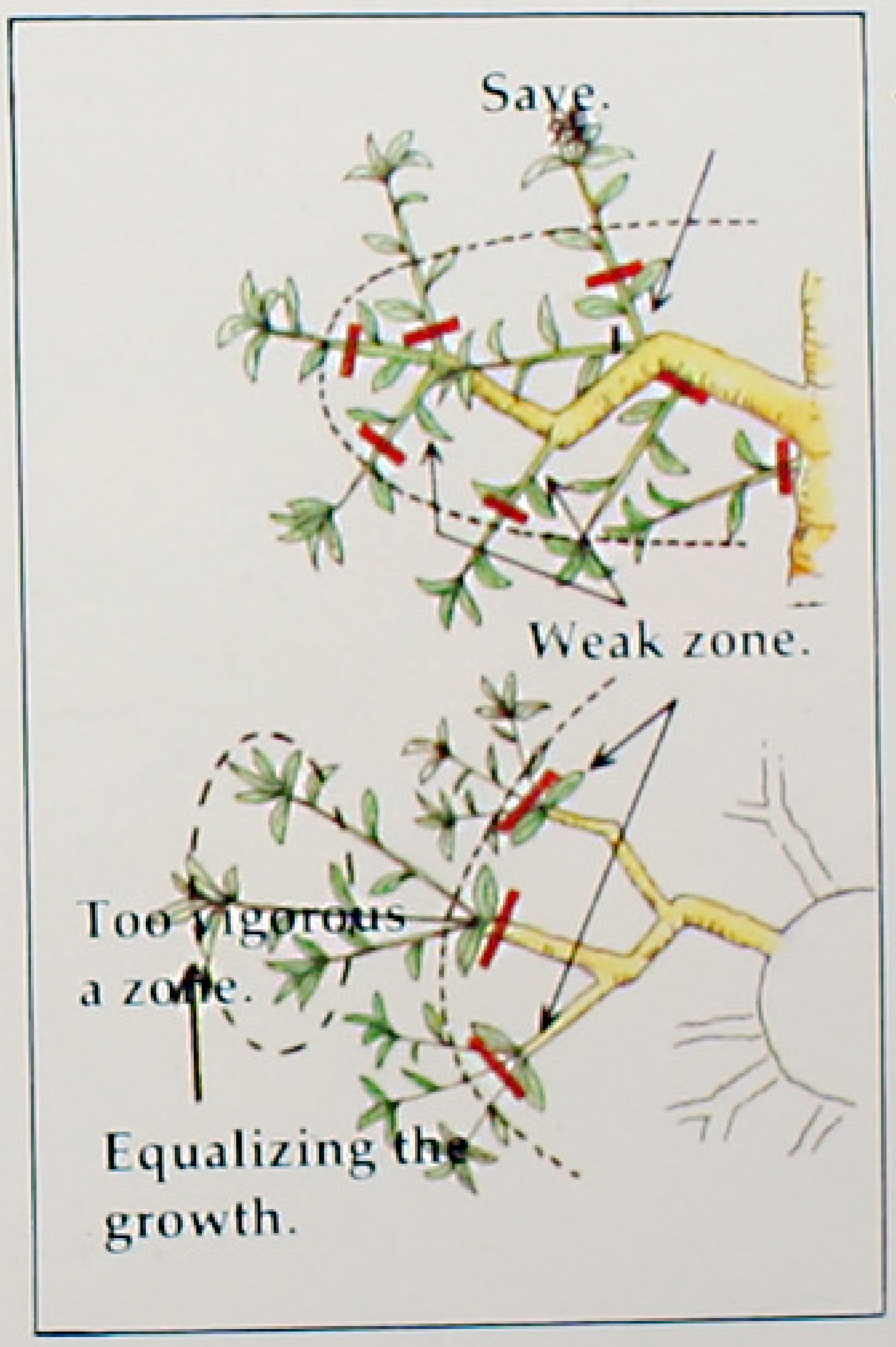
In mid June, 1985, the Bonsai looked completely different from a few weeks before; but five or six more years of cultivation would still be needed to bring out all the beauty of the tree. After flowering, all the new branches were trimmed, leaving two buds or leaves. Shoots that grew or were directed towards undesirable places were also eliminated as illustrated in the drawings below.

After repotting and pruning, adventitious buds appear.



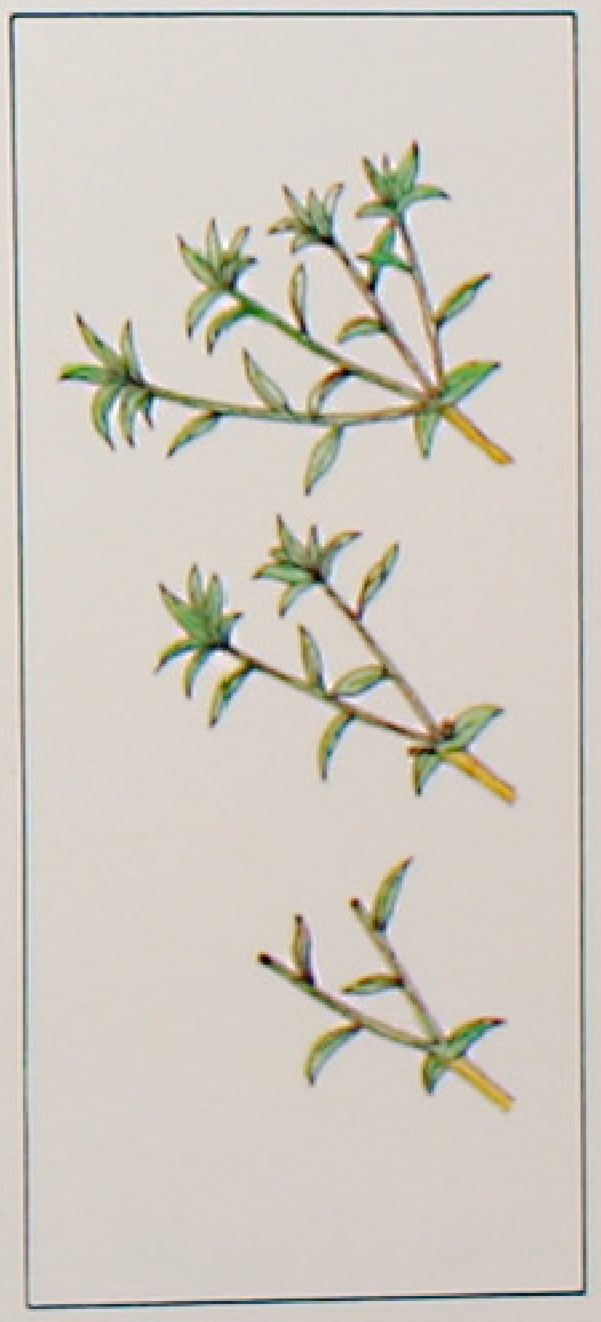
Controlling Growth

Since we were starting from old branches and had to create new secondary and tertiary branches, it was important to prune the new growth considering the future direction. In short, a job for fine scissors, not pruning scissors. It was still not time to worry about the flowering of the Bonsai; this was left until the time when the structure of the branches would be adequate.



◀ Thinning the buds.

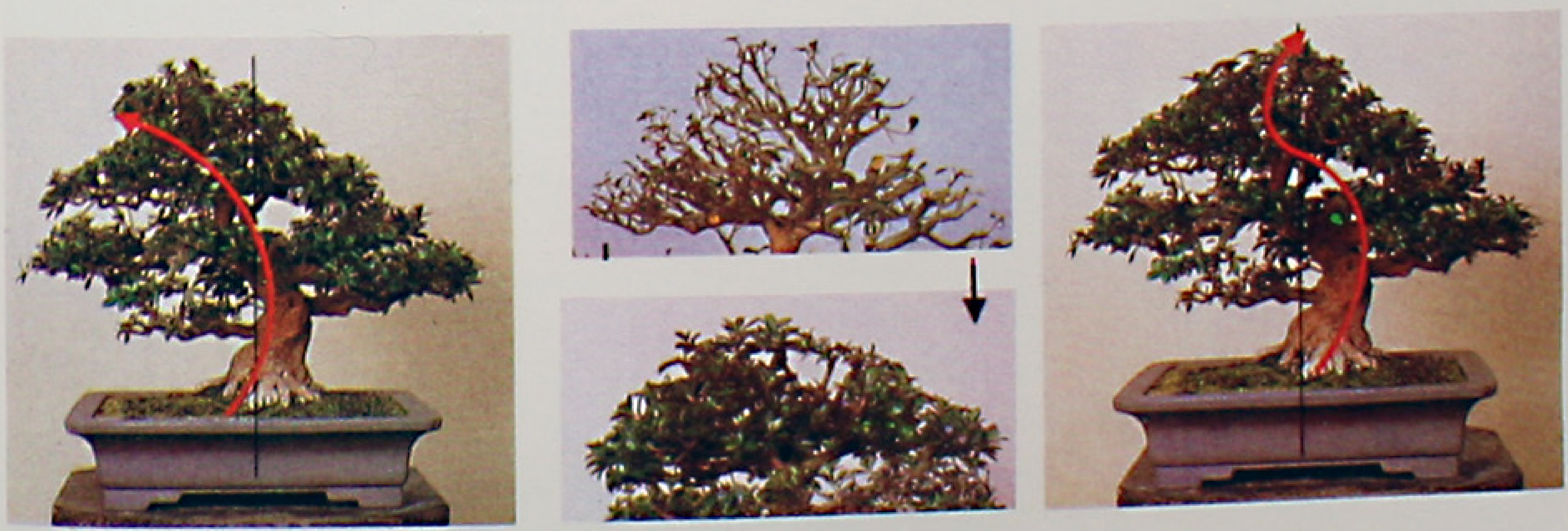
Pinching azaleas: for branches with more than two shoots, leave only two. These are pinched to leave only two leaves or buds on each shoot. ▶



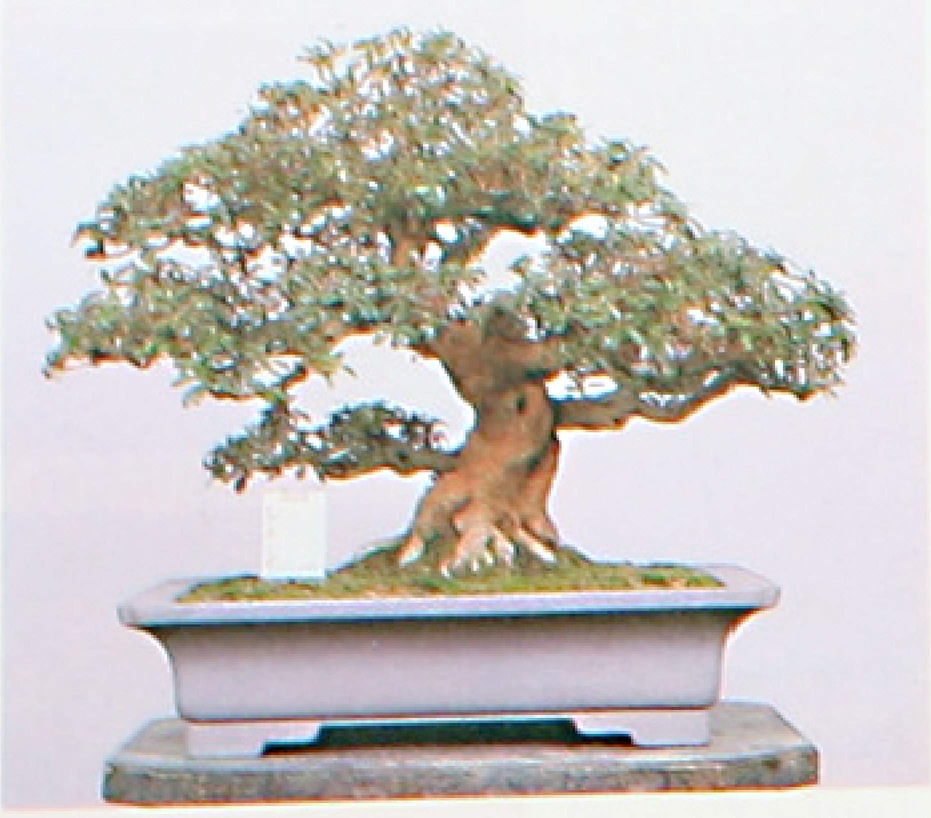
Trunk Line

Once the tree had recuperated, we could change the apex to add more rhythm to the Bonsai and develop a more refined style.

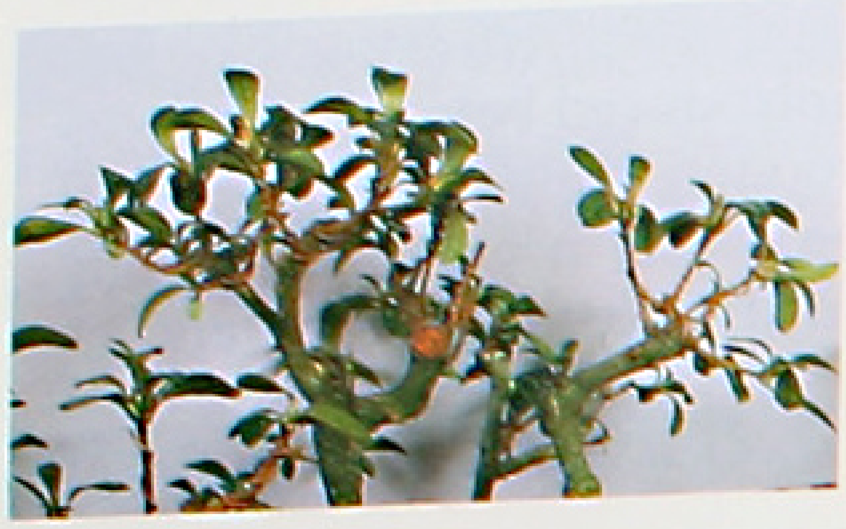
The line of the trunk was too monotonous and, with just one less branch at the apex, the appearance of the trunk had become much more dynamic.

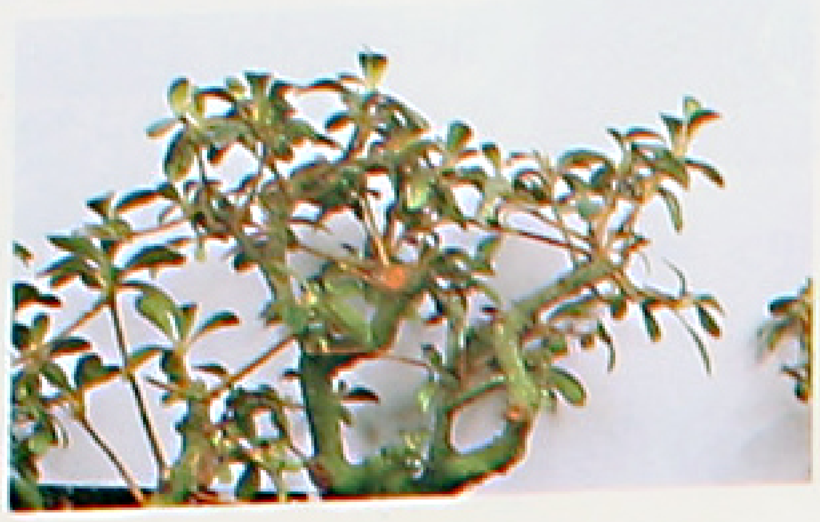


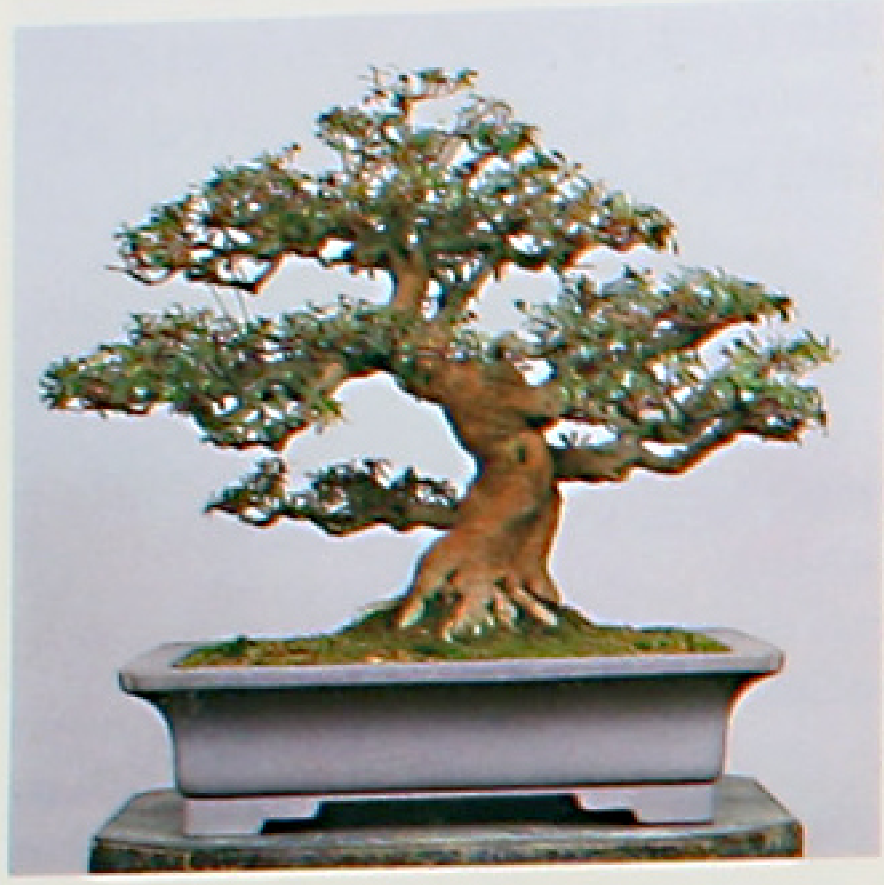
In the above illustrations, from left to right, you can see the change in the line of the trunk that was achieved just by eliminating from the apex one branch that was too tall. The change adds a visual curve that once again makes the Bonsai seem balanced over its root system.



Observe the changed appearance of the tree in just one year. The silhouette of the branches is now much clearer and allows the trunk to be seen. ▶



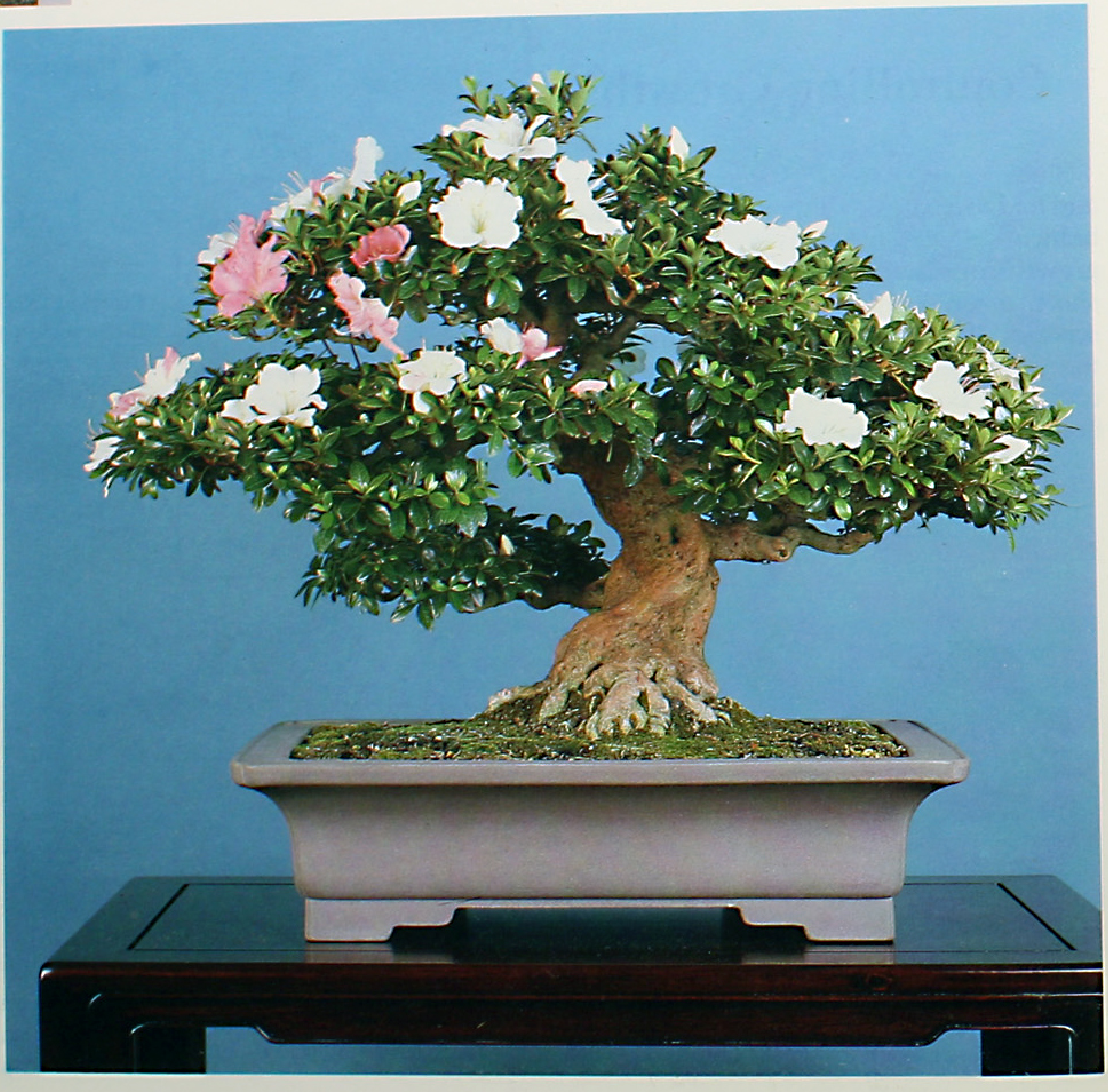




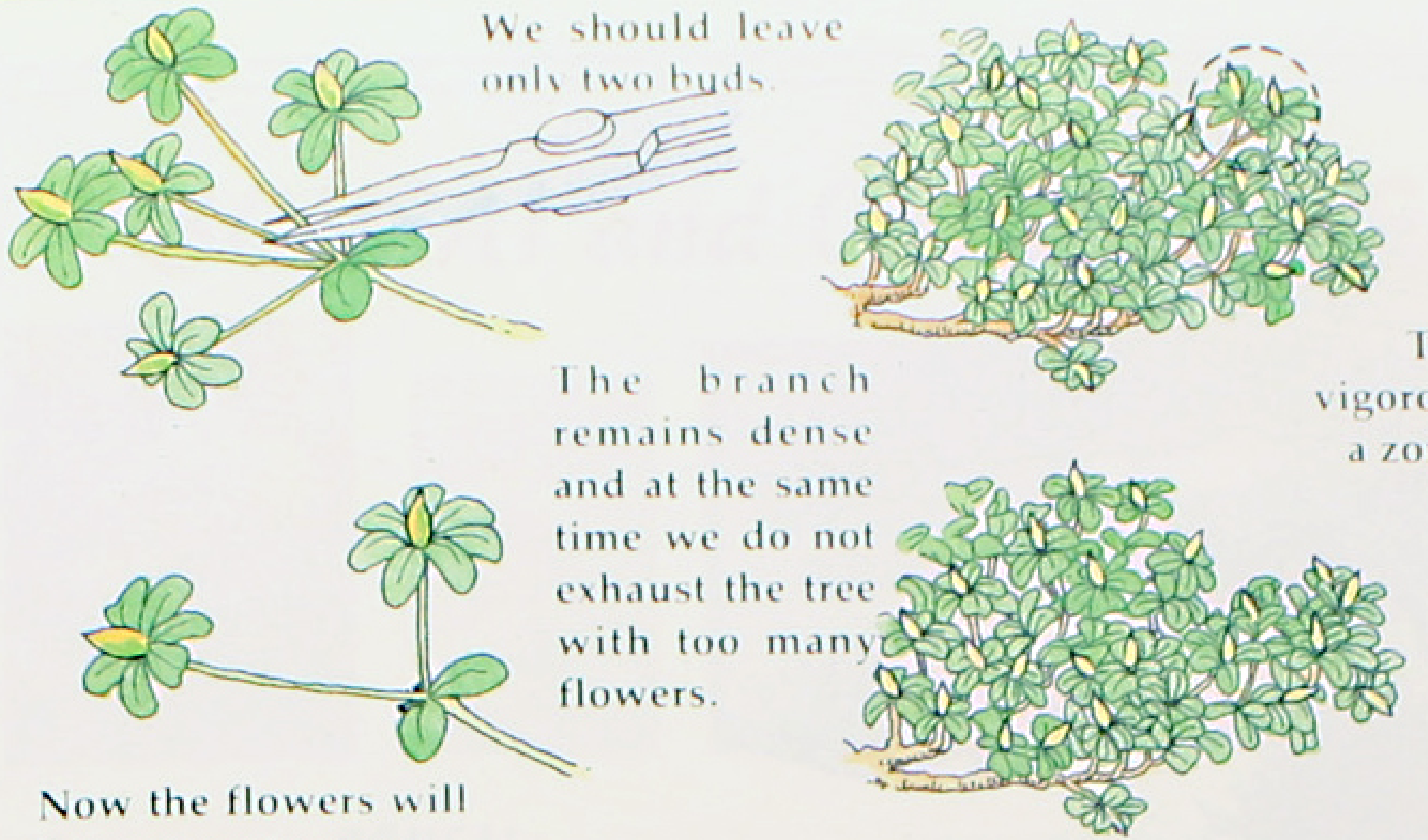
In March 1986, the movement of the line of the trunk was much more evident. This was achieved through controlling the growth of the upper part of the Bonsai, as well as through the wiring of all new growth, twig by twig, as our small illustrations show. Note that, before wiring, many twigs were crossing each other, so that the ramification was very confused.

One Year later

In March, 1986, this Bonsai glowed from all the work and patience that had been lavished on it earlier. It began to seem like an old, grand, majestic tree. What contributed to this above all was that the trunk had more character, more movement and rhythm, created through clusters of foliage in an oval silhouette, placed on the outside curves of the trunk. The shadows these branches project onto the trunk and ground add much interest and visual depth.



Photograph taken on May 28, 1986, with the tree in full flower. ▶


We should leave only two buds.

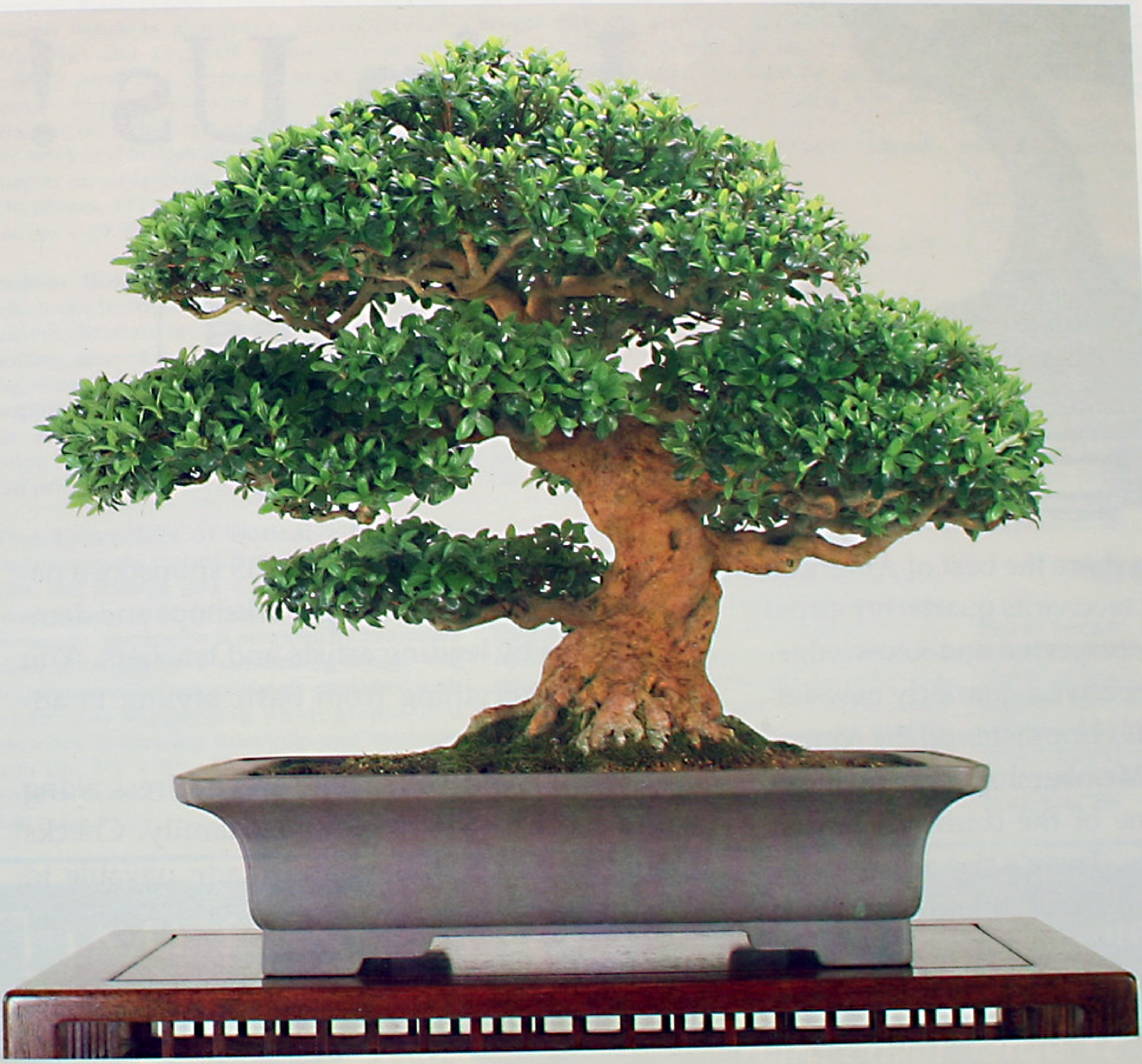
The branch remains dense and at the same time we do not exhaust the tree with too many flowers.

Too vigorous a zone.

Now the flowers will have space to grow.

Two Years later

We also need to thin the flowers. Azaleas tend to grow too densely, so that many flowers do not have space to grow. This is risky for two reasons: first, because if it makes too many flowers, the tree is weakened; second, because if the branch is too dense and has many flowers, practically no light reaches the interior of the tree, and so we can lose many needed buds. Also, the danger of infection by fungi or insects is greater the denser the branches are.



At present, much of what was hoped for from this old tree has been accomplished. All you have to do is compare it with the photograph taken in March 1985. There is only a two-years' difference, yet the tree seems to have aged forty, when in reality (since it now has new branches and roots) it has been rejuvenated. I am sure that in only three years, this Bonsai can become a work of art. I'll let you know if that's what happens.

Photograph taken
March 10, 1987.

Notes on Satsuki Azaleas

Azalea Bonsai growers can utilize old wild plants, container specimens, and overgrown Bonsai. These plants will accept drastic pruning when properly timed; the best time is at the beginning of growth in the spring.

Azaleas are able to break bud or start roots at any point on the trunk. Large lower outside limbs and unnecessary trunks should not be totally removed the first season. Leave a stub of three inches to make growth. Removing cleanly often causes the death of spreading roots directly below the cut.

Heavy branch pruning may be done anytime the plant is active, but foliage must be left on each tip. Work on satsukis should be started well before they bloom.

Azaleas will develop into Bonsai faster if flowers buds are removed, allowing an extra pruning per season and stronger growth. Be very careful not to overwater heavily pruned azaleas. Plants should be misted every day until strong new growth appears. Very light shade is good, but heavy shade is detrimental to vigorous budding.

Remember azaleas are mountain plants of bright sun, clouds, mist, fog, showers, good air, shallow roots and no heavy shade.

David Cook - Atlanta, Georgia

Bonsai
TODAY

In the next issue.

July - August 1989

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LAYERING

Layering a bonsai to eliminate a faulty lower trunk. How to stimulate the rapid formation of roots at a new level.

2
BLACK PINE

How to develop shorter needles through bud selection and pinching.

3
GALLERY

A collection of bonsai masterpieces.

4
IN THE STUDIO OF THE MASTERS

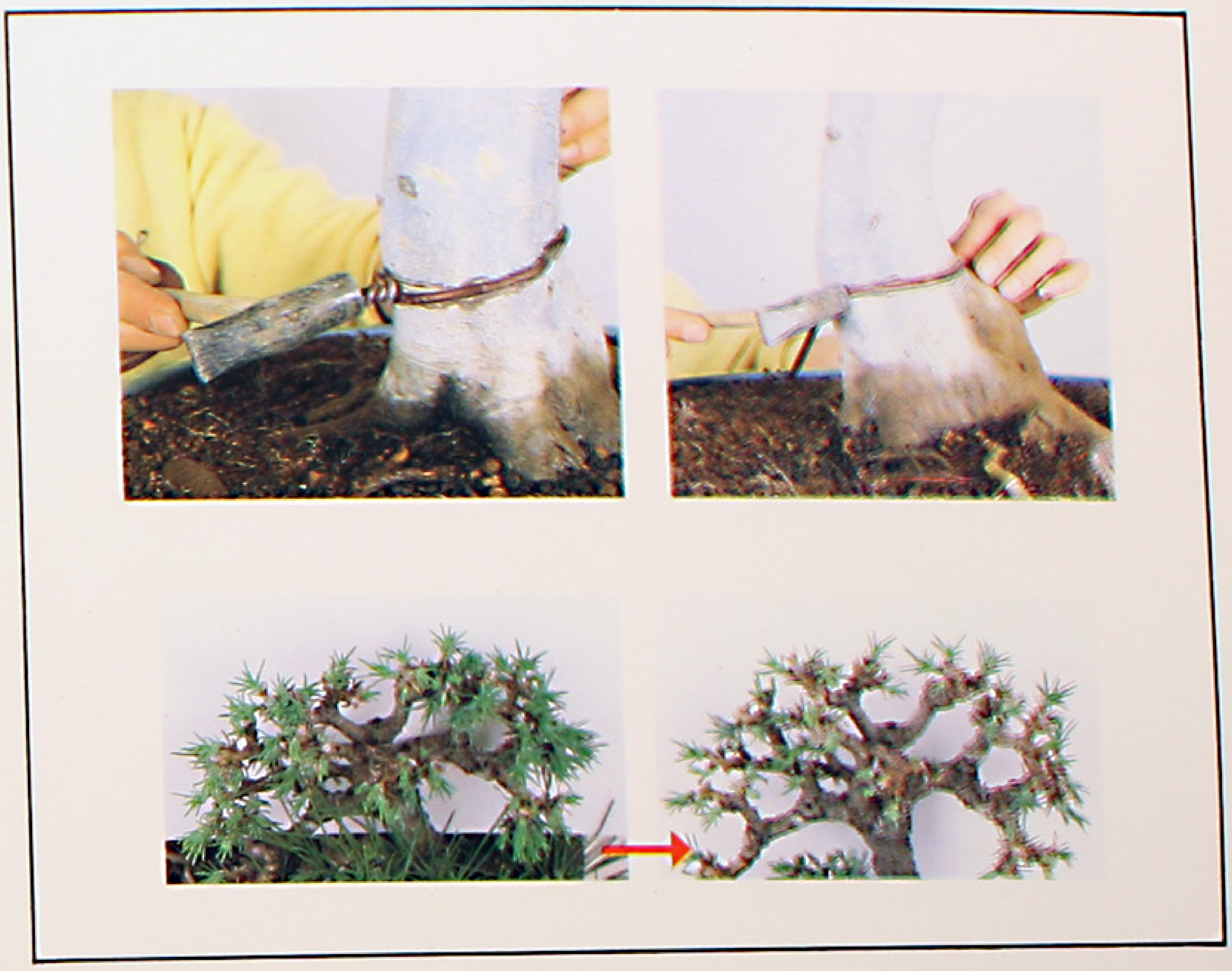
The technique for planting a pine on a rock.

5
STEP BY STEP

Needle juniper: styling and developing branch ramification.

6
CREATION OF DEAD WOOD

Jin, shari and sharimiki.



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